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# FOUR ENGLISH HUMOURISTS

OF

# THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

# FOUR ENGLISH HUMOURISTS

OF

# THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

## LECTURES

DELIVERED AT

THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN
IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1895

By WILLIAM SAMUEL LILLY
HONORARY FELLOW OF PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

> Ich kann
> In solchen Sachen nur dem eignen Licht,
> Nicht fremdem folgen.
>
> SCHILLER

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TO

JAMES DEWAR, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S.,

FELLOW OF PETERHOUSE AND JACKSONIAN PROFESSOR OF
EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE;
FULLERIAN PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY IN THE ROYAL
INSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN.

MY DEAR DEWAR,

There are two reasons why I have asked your kind permission to dedicate this volume to you.

First, I am desirous to take the present opportunity of publicly thanking you and the other members of the Governing Body of Peterhouse, for electing me an Honorary Fellow of that most ancient Society. The distinction is one of which, in any circumstances, I must be deeply sensible. It is enhanced by the lustre which your European, your world-wide renown sheds upon our College.

Again, I feel special satisfaction in writing your name here, as it was, I believe, at your suggestion that the Managers of the Royal Institution did me the honour of inviting me to deliver these Lectures. I could well wish that they were worthier of being thus associated with you. But you were so kind as to say that you listened to them with pleasure. And I may be permitted to say that—

> "I feel a free,
> A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
> With these poor offerings, a man like thee."

I am, my dear Dewar,
Most sincerely yours,
W. S. LILLY.

ATHENÆUM CLUB,
*May* 24, 1895.

# ADVERTISEMENT.

These Lectures, delivered from a few brief notes, are now printed from the shorthand-writer's report. But the Author has corrected such faults, whether of expression or conception, as he has detected, and has developed some trains of thought which it was not possible for him to follow out so fully as he could have wished when speaking at the Royal Institution.

# SUMMARY.

## LECTURE I.

### THE HUMOURIST AS DEMOCRAT.

### *DICKENS.*

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Definition of the word "humourist:" *An artist who playfully gives us his intuition of the world and human life* . 3

This large sense of the word is somewhat new—at all events in English. But the world has in all ages possessed gifted souls to whom, if so understood, it may be fitly applied . . . . . . . . . 6

In this age the novel is the ordinary vehicle of humour. But there are humourists—Carlyle for example—who find other forms of composition more suitable to their temperament and genius . . . . . . . . 9

In these Lectures, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Carlyle will be considered as typical English humourists of the nineteenth century: Dickens being *The Humourist as Democrat*, Thackeray, *The Humourist as Philosopher*, George Eliot, *The Humourist as Poet*, and Carlyle, *The Humourist as Prophet* . . . . 11

These descriptions are not exclusive, but indicate the endowment predominant in each . . . . . 12

It is proposed in these Lectures not to analyze and compare the humour of these four writers, but rather to

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consider what is the substantive contribution of each to the world's literature, what his real message to his day and generation and to us . . . . . 12

From the point of view of literary art, Dickens is the least important of the four. The spell of his strong magnetic personality has now vanished; and it must be allowed that his personages are mostly insignificant, his incidents mostly vulgar; that much of his thought is crude, that much of his diction is inept . . . . . . . . . . . 13

He is really one of the least artistic of writers, and he is at his best in his earlier works, where he makes small pretension to art. *Pickwick* is, perhaps, his masterpiece . . . . . . . 14

He toiled during the whole of his literary life to reach a higher standard; and he seems to have most nearly attained it in *David Copperfield* . . . . . 14

No doubt he did much good work in the way of *genre* painting after *David Copperfield;* but the high art which he tried to grasp ever eluded him . . . 15

The fact is that his manner is hopelessly common. And "manner is the constant transpiration of character." Great genius as he was, he never overcame the vulgarity of his early education. He represents the invasion of the novel by the democratic spirit . . 16

But out of his limitations came his strength. His ignorance of the great literary traditions of the Western world threw him back upon himself; upon his own observation, his own experience, his own creative gift . . . . . . . . . . . 17

He possessed vigour and originality in a singular degree. His violent and lurid imagination invested his

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characters with vivid reality. His ideas are strongly dramatic, or rather melodramatic . . . . 17

The foundation of his character was passionate sensibility, which found vent, with equal readiness, in laughter and in tears . . . . . . . . . . 19

He excelled equally in burlesque, in caricature, and in pathos. Specimens of his excellence in these three styles . . . . . . . . . . 19

So much concerning Dickens as a literary artist. His special work was to democratize the novel . . 27

He revealed the masses to the classes, first making us realize the degradation and want and misery surrounding wealthy and comfortable homes . . . 27

He revealed the masses to themselves, touching and attracting them as no writer before him had touched and attracted them, and doing a great work for the idealization of common life . . . . . 28

It is not easy to overrate the debt under which he has thereby laid the world. He, more than any one else, laboured to deliver the common people from the debased and vulgar Positivism which is a special danger of the present day . . . . . . . 29

But there is another sense in which Dickens may be called *The Humourist as Democrat.* While standing aloof from party politics, which he regarded with contempt and loathing, he fought strenuously, throughout his life, for the enfranchisement and elevation of the masses. He was indefatigable in the cause of real reform; and he effected much . . 30

What his permanent place will be in English literature is a question which cannot, as yet, be answered.

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His popularity with the masses is still very great; but he is grievously wanting in form, which is what gives vitality to a book. Moreover, his sentimental realism is not the highest order of romantic fiction, although he is by far the greatest English exponent of it . . . . . . . . . . 32

"Every inch of him an honest man," was Carlyle's observation on hearing of his death. And the ethical sentiment which breathes through his pages may well cover a multitude of sins of taste . . 33

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## LECTURE II.

### THE HUMOURIST AS PHILOSOPHER.

### *THACKERAY.*

Taine's indictment of Thackeray. The chief count in it is that Thackeray is a philosopher, contemplating the passions satirically, not as poetic forms, but as moral qualities. Minor offences of Thackeray, according to Taine, are misanthropy and cynicism, the insignificance of his characters, and his levelling tendencies. . . . . . . . . . 37

Taine's complaint of Thackeray as a moral philosopher will first be considered. It rests upon the position that the novelist should be "a psychologist and nothing more, painting the passions and sentiments of the soul as they are, and not troubling himself with their ethical worth and significance" . . 39

It may be conceded that a novelist should be a psychologist. But what is psychology? . . . . 41

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The word means the branch of philosophy which studies the human mind or soul. But for Taine and his school the soul is merely a poetic expression, a rhetorical figure; and what is called mental activity, is really sensuous consciousness. For Taine psychology is merely a subordinate department of biology: he reduces it to molecular physics . . . . . 42

If this is the true account of psychology, no doubt the ethical idea is an intruder there. For physical science is wholly the science of the senses, and knows nothing of justice and injustice, right and wrong, moral good and moral evil . . . . . 41

If the novelist is a psychologist in this sense, it may be granted that he has nothing to do with ethics, for ethics in any true meaning of the word do not exist for him . . . . . . . . . . . 42

But this is not a true conception of psychology. Psychology is not a history of phenomena conventionally styled psychical, but really physical. It is the science of a real indivisible agent, the mind, soul, or thinking principle which is a man's true self. The unity of the Ego is its starting-point . . . . . . . 42

If psychology be thus conceived of, the novelist, in his capacity of psychologist, is concerned with men not as mere matter in motion, but as animated by minds or souls. And the very first fact about the mind or soul is that it is endowed with perceptions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, and the like. Conscience, the power of volition, the moral sentiments, moral habits, moral responsibility, are primary psychical facts. With them the novelist, *qua* psychologist, is necessarily concerned . . . 43

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The novel should be the image of the human soul. And the two chief elements of a good novel are truth and passion . . . . . . . . . . 44

The first equipment of a novelist for his task is the perception of the true—that is, of the double character of ideality and phenomenality possessed by all human things. The essence of romantic fiction is the close union of all the elements of the composition with the ideal which they contain . . . . . 44

From this union of the phenomenal and the ideal a novel derives that character of truth which touches us by its relation with our double nature. There must be an ethical ideal of some sort in it—be that ideal right or wrong, spurious or genuine—if it is to be true to life: for man is an ethical animal. Of all human ideals, the moral comes first. It embraces our entire being; other ideals only segments thereof . . 44

The proper vocation of the artist in romantic fiction, as of all artists, is to elevate, to idealize, to refine . . 45

Here is the true distinction between art and physical science. Physical science deals with all the facts, regardless of their ethical significance. The artist in romantic fiction is not concerned with *all* the facts. His work is essentially poetical. And the first duty of the poet is choice . . . . . . . . 45

The great ethical principles of reserve, respect, reverence, shame, prescribe limits to imagination as to action. The passions are largely and legitimately the subject of the novelist; but he should deal with them as an artist, not as a physiologist . . . . . . 45

The ethos of a widely read novel is a most important question. And the ethos comes out in the author's

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treatment of his subject, rather than in his choice of personages, his plot, or his catastrophe . . . . 46

The true test of the merit or demerit of a novel is the impression left on a healthy mind; a mind infected neither by pruriency nor by prudery . . . . 47

When the sensuous impression overpowers the spiritual, we have a bad book . . . . . . . . . 48

Applying these principles to the novelist's treatment of sexual love, we may say that while the physiologist is concerned with it as a mere animal impulse, he, in his character of psychologist, is concerned with it as transformed, in greater or less degree, by the imaginative faculty . . . . . . . . 49

View taken of this matter by Balzac, with whom Taine compares Thackeray . . . . . . . . 50

No doubt Thackeray is far inferior in genius to Balzac, nor has he Balzac's talent. But the two men had in common certain natural endowments, originality of intellect, perspicuity of observation, a warm and potent instinct of practical life, and a curious divinatory power . . . . . . . . . 51

Such were some of Thackeray's most striking natural endowments for his work as a humourist. His training at the Charterhouse and at Cambridge, his travels in Germany and France, and the time spent by him at an Inn of Court supplied him with his intellectual preparation for his destined task . . . . . 51

His loss of fortune, in early manhood, drove him to literature as a profession; and a grievous domestic affliction which befell him, gave him the moral discipline required for deepening and strengthening his character . . . . . . . . . . 53

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His literary apprenticeship of twelve or thirteen years was a period of unremitting labour. It was not until 1846, that the publication of his *Snob Papers* in *Punch* established his reputation as a master of his craft . 55

The *Book of Snobs* is a masterpiece of humour. Its playfulness is of the satiric order. The keen vivacious satire of an accomplished man of the world is Thackeray's distinctive note as a humourist . . 56

Vindication of Thackeray from Taine's charge of levelling tendencies . . . . . . . . . . 56

The publication of *Vanity Fair*, in 1847, marked Thackeray's advent from obscurity and poverty to fame and comparative affluence. Singular literary merits of the book. The reputation made by it maintained by his later works . . . . . . . . . 58

Thackeray's great veracity as a literary artist . . . 59

Thackeray paints life as it is. And he knew that life rests upon elementary moralities. His books are his experiences of life, his observations of life, his meditations upon life, dramatized, so to speak, and put upon his mimic stage. And the ethos of the drama is ethical . . . . . . . . . . 61

Philosophy, in the narrow and technical sense of metaphysics, cannot be ascribed to him. But he was a philosopher in the wider sense of a genuine lover of wisdom, an eager student of real existence . . 61

His philosophy of life comes into special prominence in all his writings, it is his distinguishing characteristic, and should be accounted his peculiar merit . 61

He was not a misanthrope, as Taine asserts. Clearly as he saw, and vividly as he painted, the seamy side

PAGE

of society, he saw with equal clearness and painted with equal vividness, the truth and incorruptness, the purity and goodness, the love and pity which exist side by side with the abounding evil; and he discerned in these things the real goods of existence . 62

His "good people" are not contemptible and uninteresting . . . . . . . . . . 63

Nor was he a cynic or a mere satirist. He appeals to our primary moral sympathies, our fundamental ethical beliefs, our highest spiritual instincts: and springs of tenderness and pathos are ever welling up in his writings . . . . . . . . . . 64

His moral philosophy breathes the spirit of Kant, although we may be quite sure that he had never read a line of that master. It is underlain by three great principles, which are distinctly Kantian: the personality of man, the probationary character of human life, and the existence of a state beyond the phenomenal, where the triumph of the moral law will be assured . . . . . . . . . . 66

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Various instruments of spiritual awakening: religion, external nature, and art . . . . . . . . 77

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The form of art which appeals most widely is the poetic; and at the present time the function of poetry is of ever-growing importance . . . . . . . 79

In these days the most widely influential poets are those who do not employ metrical forms . . . . . 81

It must be remembered that poetry is independent of those forms. "The accomplishment of verse" is not of its essence . . . . . . . . . . . 81

Truth has two modes of expression: the language of fact and the language of fancy; the tongue of the phenomenal and the tongue of the ideal. The true antithesis is not between prose and poetry, but between prose and verse . . . . . . . . . 82

To appreciate verse demands much more culture than to appreciate prose. And in this age literature has become democratized. Poets who are content to be unmetrical, command many more readers than poets who write in verse. For a long time to come the novelist, according to his inspiration and in proportion to his power, is likely to be the most popular, the most successful preacher of ideal truth . . . 82

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scription
nsibility
eflection
Imagination
[illegible]
Invention
Judgement

In George Eliot we have *The Humourist as Poet.* Her humour is of the Socratic order. Her truest poetry is in her novels . . . . . . . . . 84

She possessed in an eminent degree the "six powers requisite for the production of poetry," which Wordsworth has enumerated . . . . . . . . 86

The ethos of her prose poetry has been sometimes misapprehended. She has been described as "the most influential Positivist writer of her age:" and as

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"the first great godless writer of fiction that has appeared in England" . . . . . . . 90

No doubt she was in a sense a Positivist. But she was not an influential Positivist writer. The writings in which she expounded her philosophy, such as it was, exercised little influence. And her novels were not a vehicle for Positivist propagandism . . . 91

To George Eliot, the artist—whatever she may have held as a philosopher—the great Theistic idea was the source of her deepest and most powerful inspiration . 93

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In this union of Positivism and Mysticism she is typical of her age . . . . . . . . . . . 98

The ethos of her prose poetry is essentially that of the great tragedians of ancient Hellas; her function was "that of the æsthetic, not the doctrinal teacher, the rousing of the nobler emotions" . . . . 99

There is a strong spiritual affinity between her and Euripides . . . . . . . . . . . 100

The absolute and indefeasible claim of the Divine Law upon our obedience—whatever account she may have given to herself of that law—and the inexorableness of its penal sanctions, are the deep underlying thought of George Eliot . . . . . . . 101

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And he is *The Humourist as Prophet;* seeing, by virtue of the insight, the inspiration, that is in him, through phenomena into reality, rightly reading and interpreting the signs of the times . . . . . . 125
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His Theism . . . . . . . . . . . . 133

His ethics . . . . . . . . . . . . 135

It appeared to him that the fundamental truths of religion and morals which he so strongly held, had largely lost their hold upon men's hearts and lives . . 137

Side by side with a profession of Christianity not consciously false, he found practical Atheism . . . 139

And the Utilitarian philosophy appeared to him the appropriate philosophy of an age of practical Atheism . 139

Our political, our social arrangements, appeared to him unveracious, unjust, and doomed. That, as he considered, was the meaning of the popular movement throughout Europe, little as its leaders knew . . 140

In his article *Corn Law Rhymes* which appeared in 1832, his outlook on the condition of the world is clearly indicated . . . . . . . . . . . 142

And from that time until 1867, when he published his *Niagara*, he felt from time to time "a kind of call and monition" to lift up his testimony concerning the condition of England: whence his *Chartism*, his *Past and Present*, his *Latter Day Pamphlets* . . 143

Veneration for, conformity with, loyalty to truth—this was the Alpha and Omega of his spiritual and intellectual life . . . . . . . . . . . 151

He found the political order reared on one fundamental lie—the right of all men, whatever their capacity or incapacity, to an equal share of political power; and the economic order upon another fundamental lie, expressed in the phrase, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" . . . . . . . 152

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To the cult of majorities, Carlyle opposed the cult of superiorities; to the rule of the multitude, the necessity of loyalty and obedience . . . . . 154

To the purely empirical doctrine based on calculations of profit and loss, that happiness, or agreeable feeling, is the test of all rules of conduct and the end of life, Carlyle opposed the fundamental, aboriginal, indecomposable idea of right as a divine order ruling throughout the universe . . . . . . . 156

Further, Carlyle discerned and declared, that at the root of Rousseauan egalitarianism and Benthamite utilitarianism there lay a false conception of human freedom, an untrue doctrine of man's autonomy, issuing, in the one case, in the tyranny of the mob, in the other, in the tyranny of capitalists . . . 158

Carlyle judged that the condition of human freedom is in obedience to law issuing from the nature of things: that liberty to find one's appointed work in the world and to do it, is alone real liberty . . . . . 158

The true description of the political and economical condition of this age appeared to Carlyle to be not liberty but anarchy . . . . . . . . . 159

Chaos of [illegible] impulse

The assertion sometimes made that Carlyle sympathized with the socialistic movement is partly true. In so far as that movement is a protest against the political and economical anarchy of our day and on behalf of the reorganization of the commonwealth, Carlyle did sympathize with it . . . . . . . . 161

Carlyle agreed with the Socialists in holding that work is a social function and property a social trust: that the great economic problem of the age is the proper division of the fruits of labour, and that we can no

PAGE

longer leave that division "to be scrambled for by the law of the strongest, law of supply-and-demand, law of *Laissez-faire*, and other idle laws and unlaws" 163

But Carlyle did not believe in the equal distribution of physical comfort—the Utopia which many of the leaders of the socialistic movement are looking for, and, as they suppose, hastening unto—any more than he believed in the equal distribution of political power 167

Moreover, between Carlyle and the most widely popular school of Socialism there was a great gulf fixed. Carlyle's political and economical doctrines are the outcome of his Theism and his transcendental conception of duty. That school is frankly atheistic and utterly unethical; and its teaching would have been reprobated by Carlyle as "a deadly plague" . 167

In Carlyle's political and social doctrine the sacred rights and inalienable prerogatives of human personality appear to be inadequately recognized . . . 172

And in his religious belief precious elements that the world cannot do without, seem to be lacking . . 173

Though personally unable to associate himself with any Christian Church or sect, his attitude to Christianity throughout his life was one of devout and grateful reverence . . . . . . . . . . . 173

And as years went on, his sympathies with existing religions grew larger . . . . . . . 175

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# LECTURE I.

## THE HUMOURIST AS DEMOCRAT.

## *DICKENS.*

# FOUR ENGLISH HUMOURISTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

## LECTURE I.

### THE HUMOURIST AS DEMOCRAT.

### *DICKENS.*

It is a dictum of Cicero that every rational discussion should begin with a definition. I hope that the four Lectures which I shall have the honour and the pleasure of delivering here, will be rational discussions. And, therefore, I will not neglect the monition of the great Roman dialectician. I will begin by endeavouring to place before you a definition of the word "humourist." The title of these Lectures, as I need hardly say, has been suggested to me by Thackeray. Let us turn to his *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, and see how he accounted of the humourist. He tells us—

"The humourous writer proposes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness—

your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture—your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy. To the best of his means and ability he comments on all the ordinary actions and passions of life almost. He takes upon himself to be the weekday preacher, so to speak."

Now, this seems to me as excellent as it is admirably expressed. It is not a definition, indeed. But it will help us towards one. The ordinary actions and passions of life are the subject of the humourist. But he brings to them what the Germans call *Schauen*, vision, intuition. He sees those ordinary actions and passions more clearly than we see them. Custom dulls the perception of most of us. The obvious—that which is immediately before our eyes—is what we know least accurately. But more. The humourist is not merely a spectator of the ordinary actions and passions of life. He pierces below the surface of things to the secret recesses of the moral world. He is an observer of manners and of psychological facts; a student of character and of external nature; a painter of social phenomena and of the reveries of the solitary heart. He holds up the mirror to nature, the magic mirror of artistic imagination. And in it he reveals to us our environment and ourselves. His study, his observation, supply him with the materials wherewith his genius is to body forth an image of man and society. I use the word "genius" advisedly. Mere closeness of observation, skill in delineation, taste and judgment in arranging the incidents of his fable, a certain power of idealization, are necessary to him; but they are not enough. Carlyle rightly considered humour the characteristic of the highest order of mind. To constitute a man a humourist, in the full sense of the word, he must possess that creative gift which is the special characteristic of genius.

Let us dwell on this a little; it is worth while. For all the difference between talent and genius is here. Talent is merely imitative, and all imitation is more or less false. But genius is creative. And all its creations are, in a sense, real. I do not mean that they necessarily correspond with phenomenal reality. In a work of fantasy they do not. There never was an old sailor like the ancient mariner in that wonderful poem which is the high-water mark of Coleridge's genius. But the ancient mariner is pre-eminently a real creation, a living type. The types which come from the hands of genius are living types. It is not that the man of genius has imagination and that the man of talent has it not. It is rather—Goethe, as I remember, has admirably expressed this—that there are two kinds of imagination, the passive and the active. We all have passive imagination in a greater or less degree. And by means of it we apprehend the images of sensible things, and reproduce them in our memory; and associate them with material objects. But the incommunicable attribute of genius is that active imagination which constrains exterior objects to express the artist's thought. This is the divine endowment of those select few who alone, in any true sense, can be called poets—creators, that is—whether they use the brush, the chisel, the musical instrument, or the pen, to body forth what they discern in the high reason of their fancies. This the humourist has in common with other artists. What is his *differentia*, as the technical phrase is, his special note, his characteristic endowment? It is that he treats his subject with a certain playfulness. It may be the grim playfulness of the tiger, as in Swift, or the sportive playfulness of the kitten, as in Gay. But, whatever its form—and there are a great many forms which it may assume—that it is which differentiates the humourist from other artists. And now I think we may get our definition. The humourist, we may say, is an artist who playfully gives us his intuition of the world and human life. He is admirably pictured in the description of Horace which we owe to Persius—

> "Omne vafer vitium ridenti Flaccus amico
> Tangit et admissus circum præcordia ludit."

Flaccus touches every subtle vice for a smiling
friend and being admitted plays around the heart.

I suppose this large sense of the word is somewhat new—in English, at all events. I am not sure that any of our writers before Thackeray used it in so wide a significance. But certainly the world has, in every age, possessed highly gifted souls to whom it may, if so understood, be fitly applied. Surely the old Hebrew sage to whom we owe the book of *Ecclesiastes*, Koheleth, if that is a proper name—it probably is not—was a humourist of no mean order. M. Renan has pictured him as "old, decrepit, and exhausted," having drained the cup of life, and then moralizing over its lees. Whether that account be true or not, certainly Koheleth's summary of human life, "Vanity of vanities—all is vanity," is true, not of an age, but for all time; while we have the humourous application of that great verity—"sapientia ludens in orbe terrarum" in the precept, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works; let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment; live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity:" sportive kind advice, which is, I suppose, the Hebrew equivalent of the Horatian "carpe diem." The great Hellenic humourist is Aristophanes. What brilliancy of sarcasm, what exuberance of wit light up his vivid page! With what inimitable playfulness, does he paint the picture of his times; for example, in *The Clouds*, the most perfect, as I think, of all his comedies. And I may add, what a satire is it on him—the grim humour of events—that honest as I do not doubt his intentions were, he should have succeeded in so completely misrepresenting the noblest of his countrymen; nay, that he should have contributed, as I fear we must hold he did, to "the foulest deed save one that ever disgraced the annals of our race—the accusation and execution of Socrates." The typical Roman humourist I take to be Horace. I like to picture him to myself, sauntering along the *Via Sacra*, "nescio quid meditans nugarum et totus in illis:" meditating playfully on "trifles" which were to issue in those perfectly chiselled odes of his, the delight of cultivated men for eighteen generations since; or in those inimitable satires, as they may be truly called, for even Pope's imitations of them—far and away the best—fall very far short of the originals. In the Middle Ages I suppose Boccaccio stands out as the greatest humourist. Landor has well said: "In touches of nature, in truth of character, in the vivacity and versatility of imagination, in the narrative, in the descriptive, in the playful, in the pathetic, the world never saw his equal, until the sunrise of Shakespeare." "The sunrise of Shakespeare"! Yes. Here as elsewhere he is the supreme artist; the humourist—

> "whom we know full well
> The world's wide spaces cannot parallel."

He is not merely the great poet of human nature in all times. He is also the most humourous delineator of life and society in the sixteenth century. Of the great humourist to whom the world owes *Don Quixote*—that unique monument of Spanish genius, at the moment when it descended from the sphere of chivalrous idealism to grovel in the dust—I must not speak. I must not even glance at the humourists of France, although it is hard to pass by in silence such old and cherished friends as Rabelais and Montaigne, or at those of Germany and Italy. I need say nothing of our own humourists of the last century, concerning whom Thackeray has written so well. I have said enough, perhaps, to indicate the sense in which I use the words "humour" and "humourist," and so to make, as I trust, a fair start.

I go on to observe that in this age of ours the novel is the most ordinary vehicle of humour. Johnson defined the novel as "a short tale, generally of love." The "short tale" has developed, at all events in this country, into the familiar three volumes. Its chief theme is still the most universal, the most masterful of passions; yet it claims to survey the whole field of human action. The political novel, the military novel, the religious novel, are well-known varieties of it. And there are those who are by way of giving us the scientific novel. The vast space which romantic fiction occupies in contemporary literature is a curious fact well worth pondering. Here, I must

# LECTURE I.

## THE HUMOURIST AS DEMOCRAT.

## *DICKENS.*

in Thackeray, The Humourist as Philosopher; in George Eliot, The Humourist as Poet; in Carlyle, The Humourist as Prophet. I must ask you to take these descriptions on trust for the present. I shall hereafter endeavour to vindicate them. But I may here just add the caution that they are not intended to be exclusive. All four of these great humourists were essentially of their age, and were therefore, in a sense, democrats. They were all, in a sense, philosophers, poets, prophets. But I have described each by the endowment which seems to me predominant in him; by the gift which he possessed in largest measure, and of which he made fullest proof. And here let me observe that I shall deal very little with the distinctively humourous element in my four subjects. It would be beside my purpose to analyze and compare their various kinds of playfulness. That has been done over and over again. And I should feel that I had brought you here on false pretences, if I were to do it once more. I shall assume that you know all about that; and I shall follow a line of thought not perhaps so familiar to you. I shall occupy myself specially in considering what the substantive contribution of each of these four great writers to the world's literature is; what is the real message of each to his day and generation, and to us.

To speak first then of Dickens. I take him first for several reasons. One reason is that he comes first chronologically. Another reason is that less time will suffice for speaking of him than for speaking of any of the other three. And the introductory remarks which I have found it necessary to make, have taken up a quarter of my hour. There are, indeed, some points of view from which the work of Dickens may be said to be more important than the work of Thackeray, George Eliot, or even Carlyle. But from the point of view of the literary art he is the least important of the four. Let me first of all speak of him from this point of view. Let me consider him as an artist. The time has now come when we can hope to do that impartially. It could not have been done impartially when the world was under the spell of his strong magnetic personality; when the hardest head, the most captious critic, had to give in to him. Sydney Smith said, "I resisted Mr. Dickens as long as I could; but he has conquered me." He conquered every one. He certainly conquered me, as a boy. I now go back to him with an effort. I have looked through those twenty odd volumes of his in preparation for this Lecture. It is the first time for some years that I have opened him. And I confess I marvel at the fascination which he once had for me. I stand aghast at the inane insignificance of most of his personages, at the vapid vulgarity of most of his incidents, at the consummate crudity of much of his thought, at the intolerable ineptness of much of his diction. He was constantly talking —at least in his latter years—of his art. He seems to me one of the least artistic of writers.

He is at his best in his earlier works, where he makes small pretence to art. In my opinion his masterpiece is *Pickwick*—" a comic middle-class epic" it has been called, perhaps not unhappily. It is irresistibly funny; inimitably fresh; incomparably fantastic; a farce, but a farce of a very high order. Dickens himself always thought slightingly of it. He was ambitious, laudably ambitious, to do greater things. And during the whole of his literary life he toiled earnestly, passionately, to attain a higher standard. I think he came nearest to that standard in *David Copperfield*. There is much—very much—there which we could wish away. In fact I, if I take the book up, give effect to my wish, and practically put aside a great deal of it. And no doubt many other readers do the same. But it is informed by a simple power, a sober veracity, a sustained interest, peculiarly its own among its author's works. Dickens's young men are, as a rule, impossible. They are well-nigh all of the same inane type. He seems to have got them out of an Adelphi melodrama. But David Copperfield, who is a transcript from his own troublous and distressed childhood and youth, is, at all events, human. His young women are as inane as his young men. His amatory scenes—good heavens let us not speak of them and their mawkish sentimentalities! What a theme for a poet had he in Steerforth and Little Em'ly! How George Sand would have treated it! How George Eliot has treated a similar theme in *Adam Bede!* But Dickens possessed no words to tell forth that idyll. And if he had possessed them he dared not to have uttered them. He stood in too much awe of Mr. Podsnap's "young person." The history of the love of Steerforth and Little Em'ly was impossible to him. He could not have narrated it if he would; and he would not if he could.

I think he never again wrote so felicitously as in *David Copperfield.* No doubt he did many fine things afterwards in the way of genre painting. We may regard him as a literary Teniers. But as years went on his manner seems to me to grow more unnatural, more stilted, more intolerable. The higher art which he tried to grasp, ever eluded him. There is an absence of composition in his work; there is no play of light and shade; there is no proportion, no perspective. His books cannot be said to be composed, they are improvised. Consider *Our Mutual Friend,* which he is stated to have regarded with peculiar satisfaction. I took it up, a few days ago, intending to read it carefully through. I was greatly tempted to lay it down at the second chapter. That chapter, as some of you will doubtless remember, gives an account of a dinner-party at the Veneerings. I wonder whether anything bearing a less appreciable relation to life was ever written. Twemlow is as unreal as Lord Dundreary, and much less amusing. Lady Tippins is as untrue as she is uninteresting. Was there ever a barrister bearing the remotest likeness to Eugene Wrayburn? or a solicitor possessing the smallest affinity with Mortimer Lightfoot? It must be remembered that Dickens professed to be a painter of manners, not an artist working in the domain of fantasy, and so was bound to keep in touch with actual existence. Then the butler, I remember, is likened to an analytical chemist, because when he offers wine to the guests he seems to say, "You wouldn't if you knew what it is made of." And when from time to time that domestic is mentioned, he is styled "The Analytical Chemist." This seems to me by no means exquisite fooling. The whole book is ghastly and phantasmal, notwithstanding the vivid flashes of genius which illuminate it here and there.

The fact is that Dickens's manner is as common as it can be. A very acute French critic once remarked to me "Sa manière d'écrire est tout-à-fait bourgeoise;" and that is the truth. But, according to Sir James Makintosh's happy dictum, manner is the constant transpiration of character.

If we want a self-revelation of Dickens, we have only to look at his *Pictures from Italy*—the worst thing he ever perpetrated. Of course there are touches of his fine genius in it, as there are in all his writings; for example, that account of the *cicerone* at Mantua, than which Sterne never did anything better. But, taken as a whole, it is bourgeois, in the worst sense of the word. It might have proceeded from a very superior bagman—a bagman of genius. Dickens's genius, great as it was, never enabled him to overcome the vulgarity of his early education. He represents the invasion of the novel by the democratic spirit. One of his French critics has sagaciously remarked, "Il était né peuple, et il l'est toujours démeuré."

But it is precisely out of Dickens's limitations that his strength came. His ignorance of the great literary traditions of the Western world threw him back upon himself, upon his own observation, his own experience, his own creative gift. No doubt, as the Roman poet says, the acquisition of the ingenuous arts softens our manners and redeems them from brutality. But it certainly tends to rub off "the picturesque of man and man;" to substitute form and gloss for vigour and originality. No one can deny that Dickens possessed these qualities of vigour and originality in a singular degree. His violent and lurid imagination, fixed upon one object, became a kind of possession. It irresistibly prompted him; it imperiously commanded him as a revelation. I know of no writer whose ideas are more strongly dramatic. He wrote, as the French would say, with his temperament. He lived in his work. The children of his brain were as real to him as the children of his flesh and blood. And it is precisely because they were so real to him, that they are real to us. It is true that he exhibits, often enough, caricatures, monsters, deformities. But they live in his pages by the power of his creative genius, though in actual life they have no existence. It is well observed by Mrs. Ritchie, in her charming book, *Chapters from some Memoirs*. "One *sees* people in Dickens's pages; their tricks of expression, their vivid sayings, their quaint humour and oddities, do not surprise one; one accepts everything as a matter of course, no matter how unusual it may be."

This was the result of that strong dramatic genius of his which came out, very early in his career, in his shorthand reports of proceedings in the police courts for the *Chronicle* newspaper; and which, in his maturer life, was displayed so wonderfully in his readings. I have never heard such reading before or since. It was, in fact, one man sustaining three or four characters, and, without the illusion of scenery or costume, bringing them before us as vividly as if we saw them on the theatrical stage. I have called his genius dramatic; it was rather melodramatic. And I confess I do not know anything which affects, which, if I may use the word, fetches one more than a well-sustained melodrama. People sometimes talk of Dickens's affectations. Unjustly. His mannerisms, even the most ungainly of them, are part and parcel of the man, just as Sir Henry Irving's well-known stage walk and stage voice are part and parcel of Sir Henry Irving.

It was Leigh Hunt who said of Dickens, "He has life and soul enough for fifty men." And the passionate sensibility which Taine considered, rightly, as I think, to be the very foundation of his character, found expression, with equal readiness, in laughter and in weeping. He is one of the very few artists who excel equally in burlesque, in caricature, and in pathos. He moves us at his will to boisterous merriment, to quiet amusement, to irresistible tears. What more audacious than the buffoonery of Mr. Richard Swiveller? What more witty than the satire on the Circumlocution Office? What more touching than the picture of Little Nell?—Landor's favourite character; the most perfect bit of pathetic writing since Cordelia, as that savage old critic Jeffrey judged. Yes: in burlesque, in caricature, and in pathos, Dickens has not been surpassed in our literature. Let me give three specimens which, in my judgment, exhibit him at his best in each of these styles. As an example of Dickens's power in burlesque, I will read you a story of Mr. Samuel Weller's. You will remember how when Mr. Pickwick chose rather to abide in the Fleet Prison than to pay the damages and costs in the action of *Bardell* v. *Pickwick*, his faithful body-servant procures his own arrest in order to join his master there. Mr. Pickwick, though greatly touched by this proof of Sam's attachment, remonstrates.

"'I takes my determination on principle, sir,' remarked Sam, 'and you takes yours on the same ground; vich puts me in mind o' the man as killed his-self on principle, vich o' course you've heerd on, sir.' Mr. Weller paused when he arrived at this point, and cast a comical look at his master out of the corners of his eyes.

"'There is no of course in the case, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, gradually breaking into a smile in spite of the uneasiness which Sam's obstinacy had given him. 'The fame of the gentleman in question never reached my ears.'

"'No, sir,' exclaimed Mr. Weller. 'You astonish me, sir; he wos a clerk in a guv'ment office, sir.'

"'Was he?' said Mr. Pickwick.

"'Yes, he wos, sir,' replied Mr. Weller; 'and a wery pleasant gentleman too—one o' the percise and tidy sort, as puts their feet in little india-rubber fire-buckets ven its vet veather, and never has no other bosom friends but hare-skins; he saved up his money on principle, wore a clean shirt ev'ry day on principle, never spoke to none of his relations on principle, fear they shou'd want to borrow money of him; and wos altogether, in fact, an uncommon agreeable character. He had his hair cut on principle vunce a fortnight, and contracted for his clothes on the economic principle—three suits a year, and send back the old vuns. Being a werry reg'lar gen'lm'n he din'd ev'ry day at the same place, vere it wos one and ninepence to cut off the joint; and a werry good one and ninepence worth he used to cut, as the landlord often said, vith the tears a tricklin' down his face, let alone the vay he used to poke the fire in the vinter time, vich wos a dead loss o' fourpence ha'penny a day, to say nothin' at all o' the aggrawation o' seein' him do it. So uncommon grand vith it too! "*Post* arter the next gen'lm'n," he sings out ev'ry day ven he comes in. "See arter the *Times*, Thomas; let me look at the *Mornin' Herald*, ven it's out o' hand; don't forget to bespeak the *Chronicle;* and just bring the *'Tizer*, vill you;" and then he'd sit vith his eyes fixed on the clock, and rush out just a quarter of a minit afore the time to vaylay the boy as wos a-comin' in vith the evenin' paper, vich he'd read vith sich intense interest and persewerance, as vorked the other customers up to the wery confines of desperation and insanity, 'specially one i-rascible old gen'lm'n as the vaiter wos always obliged to keep a sharp eye on at sich times, 'fear he should be tempted to commit some rash act vith the carving-knife. Vell, sir, here he'd stop, occupyin' the best place for three hours, and never takin' nothin' arter his dinner but sleep, and then he'd go avay to a coffee-house a few streets off, and have a small pot o' coffee and four crumpets, arter vich he'd valk home to Kensington and go to bed. One night he wos took wery ill; sends for the doctor; doctor comes in a green fly, vith a kind o' Robinson Crusoe set o' steps as he could let down ven he got out, and pull up arter him ven he got in, to perwent the necessity o' the coachman's gettin' down, and thereby undeceivin' the public by lettin' 'em see that it wos only a livery coat he'd got on, and not the trousers to match. "Wot's the matter?" says the doctor. "Wery ill," says the patient. "Wot have you been a-eatin' of?" says the doctor. "Roast weal," says the patient. "Wot's the last thing you dewoured?" says the doctor. "Crumpets," says the patient. "That's it," says the doctor. "I'll send you a box of pills directly, and don't you never take no more o' them," he says. "No more o' wot?" says the patient—"Pills!" "No; crumpets," says the doctor. "Wy?" says the patient, starting up in bed; "I've eat four crumpets ev'ry night for fifteen year on principle." "Vell, then, you'd better leave 'em off on principle," says the doctor. "Crumpets is wholesome, sir," says the patient. "Crumpets is *not* wholesome, sir," says the doctor, wery fiercely. "But they're so cheap," says the patient, comin' down a little, "and so wery fillin' at the price." "They'd be dear to you at any price; dear if you wos paid to eat 'em," says the doctor. "Four crumpets a night," he says, "vill do your bisness in six months!" The patient looks him full in the face, and turns it over in his mind for a long time, and at last he says: "Are you sure o' that 'ere, sir?" "I'll stake my professional reputation on it," says the doctor. "How many crumpets at a sittin' do you think 'ud kill me off at once?" says the patient. "I don't know," says the doctor. "Do you think half a crown's vurth 'ud do it," says the patient. "I think it might," says the doctor. "Three shillin's vurth 'ud be sure to do it, I s'pose?" says the patient. "Certainly," says the doctor. "Wery good," says the patient; "good night." Next mornin' he gets up, has a fire lit, orders in three shillins' vurth o' crumpets, toasts 'em all, eats 'em all, and blows his brains out.'

"'What did he do that for?' inquired Mr. Pickwick, abruptly; for he was considerably startled by this tragical termination of the narrative.

"'Wot did he do it for, sir!' reiterated Sam. 'Wy, in support of his great principle that crumpets wos wholesome, and to show that he wouldn't be put out of his vay for nobody!'"

I know nowhere a more perfect specimen of burlesque than this. And I incline to think that the account of Mr. Podsnap exhibits equal mastery in caricature.

"Mr. Podsnap was well to do, and stood very high in Mr. Podsnap's opinion. Beginning with a good inheritance he had married a good inheritance, and had thriven exceedingly in the

Marine Insurance way, and was quite satisfied. He never could make out why everybody was not quite satisfied, and he felt conscious that he set a brilliant social example in being particularly well satisfied with most things, and above all other things, with himself. Thus happily acquainted with his own merit and importance, Mr. Podsnap settled that whatever he put behind him he put out of existence. There was a dignified conclusiveness—not to add a grand convenience—in this way of getting rid of disagreeables, which had done much towards establishing Mr. Podsnap in his lofty place in Mr. Podsnap's satisfaction. 'I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss; I don't admit it!' Mr. Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him (and consequently sheer away) with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him.

"Mr. Podsnap's world was not a very large world, morally; no, nor even geographically; seeing that although his business was sustained upon commerce with other countries, he considered other countries, with that important reservation, a mistake, and of their manners and customs would conclusively observe, 'Not English!' when, Presto! with a flourish of the arm, and a flush of the face, they were swept away.

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"As a so eminently respectable man, Mr. Podsnap was sensible of its being required of him to take Providence under his protection. Consequently he always knew what Providence meant. Inferior and less respectable men might fall short of that mark, but Mr. Podsnap was always up to it. And it was very remarkable (and must have been very comfortable) that what Providence meant, was invariably what Mr. Podsnap meant.

"There was a Miss Podsnap. And this young rocking-horse was being trained in her mother's art of prancing in a stately manner without ever getting on. But the high parental action was not yet imparted to her, and in truth she was but an under-sized damsel, with high shoulders, low spirits, chilled elbows, and a rasped surface of nose, who seemed to take occasional frosty peeps out of childhood into womanhood, and to shrink back again, overcome by her mother's head-dress and her father from head to foot—crushed by the mere dead weight of Podsnappery.

"A certain institution in Mr. Podsnap's mind which he called 'the young person,' may be considered to have been embodied in Miss Podsnap, his daughter. It was an inconvenient and exacting institution, as requiring everything in the universe to be filed down and fitted to it. The question about everything was, would it bring a blush into the cheek of the young person? And the inconvenience of the young person was, that, according to Mr. Podsnap, she seemed always liable to burst into blushes when there was no need at all. There appeared to be no line of demarcation between the young person's excessive innocence and another person's guiltiest knowledge. Take Mrs. Podsnap's word for it, and the soberest tints of drab, white, lilac, and grey, were all flaming red to this troublesome Bull of a young person."

Dickens's greatest achievement in the pathetic, perhaps, is the chapter in *David Copperfield*, entitled, "A Greater Loss." Little Em'ly has fled. And Ham finds her letter. That letter! In it we have Dickens's genius without alloy. It is as the very voice of Nature herself.

"When you, who love me so much better than I ever have deserved, even when my mind was innocent, see this, I shall be far away. When I leave my dear home—my dear home—oh, my dear home!—in the morning, it will be never to come back, unless he brings me back a lady. This will be found at night, many hours after, instead of me. Oh, if you knew how my heart is torn. If even you, that I have wronged so much, that never can forgive me, could only know what I suffer! I am too wicked to write about myself. Oh, take comfort in thinking that I am so bad. Oh, for mercy's sake, tell uncle that I never loved him half so dear as now. Oh, don't remember how affectionate and kind you have all been to me—don't remember we were ever to be married—but try to think as if I died when I was little, and was buried somewhere. Pray Heaven that I am going away from, have compassion on my uncle! Tell him that I never loved him half so dear. Be his comfort. Love some good girl, that will be what

I was once to uncle, and be true to you, and worthy of you, and know no shame but me. God bless all! I'll pray for all, often, on my knees. If he don't bring me back a lady, and I don't pray for my own self, I'll pray for all. My parting love to uncle. My last tears, and my last thanks, for uncle!"

I have, perhaps, said enough to indicate the judgment I am led to form of Dickens as a literary artist. A man of the people—he was that by the environment of his childhood and youth, although he belonged by birth to what Matthew Arnold calls "the lower middles"—a man of the people, without early intellectual culture, and, in spite of the grave limitations and defects chiefly attributable to the want of it, he pushed his way into enormous popularity by sheer force of "his demonic genius." It was his work to democratize the novel. This is the secret of that enormous popularity of his—a popularity hardly less great on the Continent of Europe than in the British Empire and the United States of America. Democracy is the great fact of this age—a world-wide fact. And in this fine genius we have "The Humourist as Democrat." The masses, who a century ago were nothing in the public order, are now everything, or are fast becoming everything. It was the mission of Dickens to reveal the masses to the classes, to reveal the masses to themselves. He had spent his sad and troublous childhood and youth among them; he knew their way of life, their way of thought, their way of speech; for they have a dialect of their own—more penetrating, more picturesque, more pathetic than the language of the more refined and cultivated. He first made us realize the degradation and want and misery surrounding the comfortable homes of the upper and middle classes. It is a remark of Taine's—I think it is Taine's—that until we had read Dickens we did not know the depths of pity that exist in our own hearts. There was in him a sympathetic tenderness, a warmth of emotion, which ever and anon well up in his most audacious buffooneries, his most grotesque caricatures, appealing irresistibly to his readers: this is that "true music in the inner man of him," which Carlyle discerned and reverenced.

But it was the work of Dickens to reveal the masses not only to the classes but to themselves. No writer before him had known how so to attract and touch them. He has done more than any other man of our day for the idealization of common life. I do not think it easy to overrate the debt under which he has thereby laid the world. Few of us, I fancy, realize the importance of cultivating the imagination. There the faculty is—part and parcel of us—and it cannot fust in us unused. Deny it a high, a supersensuous ideal, and it will seek a low, an infrabestial ideal. I say "infrabestial" advisedly. For men and women devoid of human—that is, supersensuous—ideals, sink, not as is sometimes said, to the level of the beasts, but below it. Now I consider Dickens's biographer well warranted when he writes, "[Dickens's books] have inculcated humanity in familiar and engaging forms to thousands and tens of thousands of their readers, who can hardly have failed to make [each] his little world around him somewhat the better for their teaching. From first to last they were never for a moment, alien to either the sympathies or the understandings of any class: and there were crowds of people . . . that could not have told you what imagination meant, who were adding, month by month, to their limited stores, the boundless gains of imagination." To him they owe their appreciation of "the dainties that are bred in a book." To them he opened out a new world—which really was their old world transfigured by the magic touch of genius. It appears to me that one of the great dangers of this age is a certain moral dryness. It results from the too complete absorption in "the trivial round, the common task:" from slavery to palpable facts and utilitarian fallacies. Dickens did more than any one else to deliver the common people from this debased and vulgar positivism.

He is the great minister of the ideal to the masses. He is their Homer.

But there is another sense in which we may call Dickens "The Humourist as Democrat." Throughout the whole of his literary life he fought strenuously for the elevation and enfranchisement of the masses; for moral, social, and political reform. He called himself a Radical. And so he was, not in the sense the word bears in our party politics, which he ever regarded with contempt and loathing, but in the sense of desiring to lay the axe of reform to the root of existing abuses. From party contests he stood aloof. He thought party leaders indifferent to what he called—he had learnt the phrase from Carlyle—"the condition of England question," and intent merely on dishing their adversaries, and on obtaining or retaining place and power. And this awakened—what wonder?—his honest scorn and indignation. From time to time attempts were made to induce him to stand for Parliament. He resisted them with something of vehemence. "I declare"—this was his language to certain influential members of a London constituency who approached him with such a request—"I declare that as to all matters on the face of this teeming earth, it appears to me that the House of Commons and Parliament altogether is become just the dreariest failure and nuisance that ever bothered this much-bothered world." And in a letter written in 1854, speaking of a certain literary project, he said, "I gave up with it my hope to have made every man in England feel something of the contempt for the House of Commons that I have. We shall never do anything until this sentiment is universal." But, while he turned in loathing from "the din of vociferous platitude and quack out-bellowing quack" within those walls at Westminster, he was from first to last indefatigably active in the cause of real reform. Nor was it in vain that he insisted on the duties of society towards the poor, that he pleaded for the protection of women and children, that he sought to ameliorate the relations between workpeople and their employers, that he inveighed against cruelty in schools, in workhouses, against the law's delays—so scandalous when he began to write—against the frauds of company promoters, the abuses of sinecures, the hypocrisies of false philanthropy and false religionism, the How-not-to-do-it of the Circumlocution Office. And here let it be noted that Dickens did all this good work naturally and unaffectedly. One cannot help being struck by the ease wherewith he introduces into his grotesque or pathetic creations some political, social, or moral theme. From first to last, he was one of the simplest and least pretentious of men.

What shall we say, then, will be Dickens's permanent place in English literature? Perhaps the time has not as yet come when this question can be answered. "The balance in which the works of the masters are weighed, vibrates long before it is finally adjusted." It is hard to believe that so much genius as Dickens undoubtedly possessed, should fail to keep his books alive. Certainly the sale of them is still immense. He is hardly less popular with the masses now than he ever was. That is evident from the great demand for his writings in our Public Libraries. Among the more cultivated, his popularity is undoubtedly on the decline. He reposes undisturbed on the shelves of libraries in country houses. One does not see him in the hands of our young men at public schools or universities. I heard the other day of an Eton boy, a very clever boy, the son of an artist, a friend of my own, who was asked by his father if he had ever read Dickens. He replied, "No." "Well," said the father, "you really ought; try *Pickwick.*" The boy tried *Pickwick*, and, after getting through half a volume, came back to his father, saying, "Do you really wish me to go on with it? I will if you do; but I don't care for it." The truth is that it is form which gives vitality to a book. And Dickens is grievously wanting in form. Moreover, we must remember that Dickens's sentimental realism is not the highest order of romantic fiction. He is, however, by far the greatest of its English exponents. And that proceeds from what I may call the power of his poetic hallucination, the musicalness of his phrase, and, above all, from the personal emotion, the realized experience of suffering and sadness, which breathe through his pages. To which I may add that, unlike Victor Hugo, whom in many points he resembles, he never falsifies our sympathies. "Every inch of him an honest man," wrote Carlyle, on receiving the tidings of his death. Now Goethe has said that apart from the ethical sentiment the actual is the vulgar, the low, the gross. The ethical sentiment breathes throughout the pages of Dickens, and it may well cover a multitude of sins of taste. Whatever the judgment of posterity may be upon him, we may to-day take leave of him with that judgment of Carlyle, "Every inch of him an honest man."

# LECTURE II.

## THE HUMOURIST AS PHILOSOPHER.

## *THACKERAY.*

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### *THACKERAY.*

M. Taine, in his very valuable and suggestive work on *English Literature*, introduces what he has to say about Thackeray by a comparison between him and Dickens, which I will read. It is as follows:—

"The one more ardent, more expansive, wholly given up to *verve*, an impassioned painter of crude and dazzling pictures, a lyric prose-writer, all powerful in provoking laughter or tears, plunged into fantastic invention, painful sensibility, vehement buffoonery; and by the boldness of his style, the excess of his emotions, the grotesque familiarity of his caricatures, he has displayed all the forces and weaknesses of an artist, all the audacities, all the successes, and all the oddities of the imagination. The other, more self-contained, better instructed and stronger, a lover of moral dissertations, a counsellor of the public, a sort of lay-preacher, less bent on defending the poor, more bent on censuring man, has brought to the aid of satire a sustained common-sense, great knowledge of the heart, consummate cleverness, powerful reasoning, a store of meditated hatred, and has persecuted vice with all the weapons of reflection."

M. Taine then goes on to charge Thackeray with having converted the novel into satire—urged thereto partly by the manners of his country, partly by his own temperament. Thackeray, he complains, instead of contemplating the passions as poetic forms, contemplates them as moral qualities. This, he says, is in accordance with the English taste. And in order to illustrate that view, he goes on to consider the French taste. The French like a novel to be amusing and polite, he tells us. They would feel hurt if the writers tried to force their convictions by blows struck home (à coups pressés) and by solid arguments, by a display of eloquence and indignation. If you speak to them of human wickedness—this I may remark, parenthetically, the French novelist generally does—it must be not to teach but to divert them. The English are endowed with a grosser, a less mercurial temperament, which is nourished by a heavier and stronger diet. He quotes from Thackeray's own *Book of Snobs* the dictum that "their usual expression [is one] of intense gloom and subdued agony." They like strong emotions, precise demonstrations. These Thackeray ministers to them with both hands. He gives them the kind of grave, pungent, forcible satire they delight in.

M. Taine then institutes a comparison between Thackeray and Balzac. Balzac, he says, makes you feel like a naturalist who has been conducted through a museum possessing a fine collection of specimens and monsters. You rise from reading Thackeray feeling like a stranger who has been taken into the operating room of a hospital on a day when amputations are performed there. In Thackeray he finds the most terrible cynicism, as he might expect to find in one whom he describes as the first of Swift's disciples. (In both Swift and Thackeray he discerns not only the same misanthropy, but the same imperturbable gravity, the same solidity of conception, the same talent of illusion. He confesses, indeed, that Thackeray's misanthropy is not so thoroughgoing as Swift's. But he considers the beings whose tenderness and goodness Thackeray celebrates—Amelia Sedley, Ethel Newcome, Laura, for example—infinitely contemptible; their love and their goodness, blind, instinctive, unreasonable, and ridiculous. Further, Taine finds that Thackeray regards social inequality as a fertile source of injustice, vice, folly; and attributes to him a wish to level down distinctions of rank. "His novels," we are told, "are a war against the upper classes of his country." Finally —and now we come to the root of the matter— Taine insists that the novelist ought to be "a psychologist and nothing more;" "a psychologist who naturally and involuntarily puts psychology in action," painting the passions, the sentiments of the soul as they are, and not troubling himself about their ethical worth or significance.

In fact, M. Taine proclaims the "art for art" doctrine, which has of late years been carried to such lengths, and which M. de Maupassant has more succinctly formulated than any one else I know of. "Morality, goodness (l'honnêteté), sound principles, are things indispensable to the maintenance of the established social order; but there is nothing in common between the social order and literature;" a strong statement, to which M. Taine, in his quality of historian, might, perhaps, have demurred. M. Taine concludes his criticism of Thackeray by comparing Becky Sharp with Valérie Marneffe, very much to Becky's disadvantage. He feels especially injured by the moral reflections, the philosophical meditations, with which Thackeray's novels are interspersed. It would be easy, he complains, to extract from them one or two volumes of ethical essays after the manner of La Bruyère or Addison. In short, M. Taine finds in Thackeray The Humourist as Philosopher, and is offended at him.

I have been led to dwell at this length upon Taine's indictment of Thackeray, because I think it sums up with singular vigour and directness what has been said, in substance, by a multitude of less able critics. I have a great respect for Taine, whom I regard as, in some ways, the first among French men of letters in this century. I may add that, slight as was my acquaintance with him, I had also a great regard for, and a great sympathy with him. And before forming my own judgment on any subject concerning which he has written, I like to see what he has said about it. Now his indictment of Thackeray appears to me quite wrong. And the error comes from this: that here—as not infrequently happened—Taine was the slave of a formula. I shall notice, incidentally, in the course of this Lecture, his complaints of Thackeray's misanthropy and cynicism, of the insignificance of Thackeray's characters, of Thackeray's levelling tendencies. But before I go further, I should like to devote a few minutes to examining the question of the relations between the novel and ethics, a question on which I find myself differing altogether with M. Taine.

Is it true, then, that the novel is independent of the great laws and principles of ethics? I think it is quite untrue. The novelist is a psychologist, Taine tells us. Very well. I have no objection to calling him so. But what is psychology? The word denotes that branch of philosophy—τῆς ψυχῆς λόγος—which studies the ψυχή, the human mind or soul; the thinking principle by which I feel, know, and will, and by which my body is animated. I am following the dictum of Cicero which I quoted in beginning my last Lecture. And even this definition is enough to bring M. Taine and myself to the parting of the ways. Taine, indeed, speaks of the soul; but—I have in my memory a passage of his book on *Intelligence*—he warns you that you must take it as no more than a poetical expression, a rhetorical figure. For him, what is called mental activity is really sensuous consciousness. Reason, intelligence, will, personality, are for him mere metaphors. He explains them by mechanism and movement. The intellect is to him a thinking machine, just as the stomach is a digesting machine. M. Taine belongs to a school—it is a numerous and an influential school, though the majority of its members have not his courage and his logic—who use physiological phraseology to describe mental states; who, in fact, make psychology a subordinate department of biology, who reduce it to molecular physics. Now, if we are so to account of psychology, no doubt the ethical idea is an intruder there. Physical science is wholly the science of the senses, and the senses know nothing of justice and injustice, right and wrong, moral good and moral evil. If the novelist is a psychologist, in this physiological sense, and nothing more, I grant that he is not concerned with ethics; for ethics, in any true meaning of the word, do not exist for him.

But that is not what I mean by soul. I hold that the soul, mind, or thinking principle, is a real indivisible agent, and that it is a man's true self. So, you will remember, the ghost of Scipio is stated to have testified, "You are not what that outward form reveals, but a man's mind is his true self; not that shape which may be pointed at with the finger." And by psychology I do not mean a history of phenomena, conventionally styled psychical, but really physical. No: I mean a science of the mind or soul; that is, a knowledge of the facts concerning it, as underlain by principles. And the true starting-point in this science I take to be that unity of the Ego which phenomenalists and sensationalists put aside. This is what I mean by psychology; and regarding the novelist as a psychologist in this sense—he may very properly be so regarded—I say that he is concerned with men, not as mere matter in motion, but as animated by minds or souls. And the very first fact about the mind or soul, is that it is endowed with perceptions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, and the like. Aristotle pointed that out two thousand years ago. Man is an ethical animal. The word "ethical" indicates his *differentia* from other animals. I say, if you survey man from the point of view of psychology, which is really such, you cannot ignore conscience, the power of volition, the moral sentiments, moral habits, moral responsibility. They are psychical facts — not poetical expressions — and primary psychical facts. The moral law is the atmosphere of man's psychical being. You cannot make abstraction of the moral law, if you wish to examine him psychologically, any more than you can exhaust the air of the chamber in which he is, if you wish to examine him physically. Man, apart from the moral law, is not man at all, but a mere primat among the animals, which you may class as biped, bimanous, and so forth, and of which this is the whole account.

That is my first point. The novelist is a psychologist in the proper sense of the word. And the novel should be, so to speak, the image of the human soul. Now what are the elements of a good novel? They are mainly two: Truth and Passion. The first thing a novelist needs, the *sine quâ non* of his equipment for his task, is the perception of the true. And by the true I mean the double character of ideality and phenomenality possessed by all human things. The essence of romantic fiction, I say, is the close union of all the elements of the composition with the ideal which they contain. From this union of the ideal and phenomenal, a novel derives that character of truth which touches us by its relation with our double nature. A mere dramatic or "realistic" recital of events is not enough. No; nor is the painting of society in its various aspects. There must be an ethical element of some sort in a novel if it is to be true to life, if it is to be really human; for man is an ethical animal. That is his great distinction among the animals. Of all human ideals, the moral comes first, because all other ideals hold of it. The moral ideal embraces our entire being: all other ideals only segments thereof. The morality of a novel may be true or false. It may refine and elevate. It may disturb and darken the judgment by flattering the passions. But a morality of some sort, true or false, genuine or spurious, it must have.

What then is the true vocation of the artist in romantic fiction? I say that his true vocation—it is the true vocation of all artists—is to elevate, to idealize, to refine. Here, indeed, is the real distinction between art and physical science. To physical science nothing is filthy or impure. The student in its domain takes all the facts, and catalogues them, in the order of their importance, and reduces them to formulas. He deals with matter. Ethics is a sphere into which he does not enter. Far otherwise is it with the artist working in the domain of romantic fiction. In the first place, he is not concerned with *all* the facts. His work is essentially poetical. And the primary duty of the poet is choice, which is governed by the eternal laws, the necessary conventions, ruling throughout the world of art. The great ethical principles of reserve, respect, reverence, shame, which have their endless applications in civilized life, prescribe limits to imagination as to action. I quite admit—I said so just now

—that passions are largely and most legitimately the subject of the novelist. All I contend for is that he should treat the passions as an artist, not as a physiologist.

I may be excused for expatiating on this matter a little. It is quite germane to my subject, and we can hardly overrate its practical importance. In this age of ours art appeals to men and women, most widely and most powerfully, under the form of literature. Poetry, the drama, romantic fiction, which is really a development of the drama—for what is the modern novel but an unacted play?—fill a large space in the lives of multitudes who never look intelligently upon a picture or a statue. But where the poet or the dramatist counts his votaries by thousands, the popular novelist counts his by hundreds of thousands—I might, perhaps, say by millions. There can hardly be a more important practical question than that of the ethos of a widely read work of romantic fiction. And it is in the author's treatment of his subject, rather than in his choice of personages, his plot, or his catastrophe, that the ethos of his work comes out. M. Taine will have it that the function of the novel is not didactic. Well, I admit that the ethical reflections of some novelists are a mere excrescence on their story—I am supposing a genuine story teller—and only serve to darken it; like the prosings of too many a preacher on the text he has never really understood. I allow, or rather maintain, that to convert the novel into a moral sermon, dealing, as sermons too often do, with *individua vaga*, with untrue types, is fatally to pervert it from its purpose. Certainly, however, the novelist is concerned not only with the exterior incidents of the lives of men, but also with their interior springs of action. The great majority of people are incapable of understanding a principle until its light falls upon a fact. It is for the great majority that the novelist writes. And if he likes to point his moral or adorn his tale by occasional reflections, I can't in the least see why he should not.

I add that the true test of the ethical merit or demerit of any work of fiction is this: What is the impression that it leaves upon a healthy mind—a mind infected neither by prudery nor by pruriency, which are but different forms of the same disease. Unquestionably this general canon may be laid down: that, in a work of art the depicting of deformity and evil is admissible only as it serves to bring beauty and goodness into stronger relief. Kant, in a pregnant passage of his *Critique of Judgment*, remarks, "Only the productions of liberty, that is, of a volition which founds itself upon reason, ought properly to be called art." Note the words "a volition which founds itself upon reason." This dictum goes to the root of the matter. The novelist and his readers are alike under that moral law which is a permanent revelation of the reason. He is morally responsible for what he wills to write, they are morally responsible for what they will to read—if, indeed, we possess any true power to will. Free-will is the real starting-point of the controversy. If we may choose what we will habitually dwell upon in our thoughts—and no man who has not sophisticated his reason away can doubt that this is largely in our power—the question arises, whether we have any right to be indifferent to the sort of facts with which we surround ourselves, which we contemplate, and which leave their impression, through the channel of the senses, upon the hidden man of the heart? Is it enough that a thing should be true, to justify us in considering it in all its bearings, and in surrendering ourselves to all its fascinations? I say that there are truths which it is well not to know, and which it is a duty not to dwell upon more than we are obliged, if we do know them; truths which tend to debase and destroy a being like man, who is constituted not only of spirit, but of spirit and sense.

And applying this to the theme before us, I say that in a work of fiction the sensuous impression should not overpower the spiritual; and that, if it does, we have a bad book. Certainly the novel must be true to life. It must not put darkness for light, or light for darkness. It must represent the darkness and the light as they are.

A work of imagination should not obtrude the moral sentiment. To employ it for the establishment of a thesis is fatally to pervert it from its true function. Flaubert says, justly, "A work of art designed to *prove* anything, nullifies itself." Let the literary artist body forth things as they are in this confused drama of existence, subject only to the reservations which the essential laws of art impose. Those, "bad good books," as they have been called, which out of respect for Mr. Podsnap's "young person," at whom we glanced in the last Lecture, or out of tenderness for "the Nonconformist conscience," depict things as they are not, stand condemned by the first principles of literary ethics, for they are wanting in the primary element of morality, which is truth.

This discussion has carried me further than I had intended. Let me close it by a practical illustration of my meaning. I said just now that truth and passion are the elements of a novel; that life is made up of the phenomenal and the ideal, and that the novelist must be true to both. Well, his main theme is, and ever must be, the passion of sexual love; the most universal, the most imperious of human sentiments. But love for him, a psychologist, is not what it is for a physiologist—a mere animal impulse which men possess in common with moths and mollusca. He is concerned with this most potent instinct as transformed, whether in greater or less degree, by the imaginative faculty; he is concerned with it as an artist, whether, dealing with it in its illicit manifestations, he exhibits it as the bane and blight of life, or depicts it in its pure and worthy expression as the supreme instrument

> "Not only to keep down the base in man,
> But teach high thought, and amiable words
> And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

Such is the conception of the relation of the novel to ethics, which I am led to oppose to that put forward by M. Taine. But M. Taine, as we saw, appeals to Balzac. Well, I agree with Taine in regarding Balzac as the greatest master of romantic fiction the world has ever seen. No doubt Balzac's judgment in this matter is entitled to much weight. But I remember that Balzac wrote, "The law of the novel is to tend to the *beau ideal*," and again, "To moralize his epoch is the end which every literary artist should propose to himself." How far this incomparable genius contributed to moralize his epoch, how far he is open to the impeachment that his virtue, after all, is only an obscene virtue, are questions that I cannot now discuss. The crudities of description which he sometimes permits himself I shall not attempt to justify. It is enough for my present purpose that I find this greatest master in romantic fiction expressly formulating that view of the relation of the novel to ethics for which I am contending. "Great works of imagination," he writes, "subsist by their passionate side. But passion is excess, is evil. The writer has nobly accomplished his task, when, not setting aside this essential element of his work, he accompanies it with a great moral lesson."

And now to come to Thackeray. Assuredly he is very far inferior to Balzac in genius. Nor has he Balzac's talent. He has not that grasp of principles, that faculty of co-ordination, that power of generalization, which Balzac possessed in such ample measure. But he had naturally a great deal in common with Balzac: originality of intellect, perspicuity of observation, a warm and potent instinct—if I may so speak—of practical life, of all its conditions, and of all its contrasts. Like Balzac, too, he possessed a certain divinatory power, a sort of gift of moral second sight. Mrs. Ritchie, in her fascinating book, which all the world has just been reading, *Chapters from Some Memoirs*, tells us that, "he sometimes spoke of a curious uncomfortable feeling he had about some people, as if uncomfortable facts in their history were actually revealed to him," a feeling which was afterwards, not unfrequently, justified. It is a curious gift and a note of the highest genius.

Such were some of Thackeray's more striking natural endowments, fitting him for his work as a humourist. No intellectual training could have supplied their place. But without intellectual training they would have profited him less. It was his good fortune—unlike Dickens—to receive, first at the Charterhouse and then at Cambridge, that instruction in the "humanities," as the fine old word is, which appears to me an incomparable instrument of intellectual culture. Thackeray was a well-read, though not an exact classical scholar. And I agree with his biographer, Mr. Herman Merivale, that "the impress of a classical training is on every line of his work, in its force of ideas, its scholarliness of thought, its simplicity of expression." He left Cambridge after two years' residence, not staying to take his degree, and travelled in Germany, where he spent some time at Weimar, "dear little Weimar town" he calls it, in one of his *Roundabout Papers*—making there the acquaintance of the great Goethe himself. He became very fairly versed in the German language, then an unusual acquirement, and made himself well acquainted with the great German poets. In French literature he was still better read. After his return from Weimar he kept terms at one of the Inns of Court—I forget whether it was the Inner or the Middle Temple. I believe, but am not quite sure, that he was eventually called to the Bar. I do not suppose that he acquired much knowledge of law, while a law student. But he certainly did acquire a knowledge of the world and of character, which we may regard as, in some sort, the completion of his education.

This was Thackeray's intellectual preparation for the work to which he was destined. And now he was to undergo a moral discipline that was also part of his training for it. In 1833 he appears to have lost the greater part of his fortune—£20,000 it is said to have been—some of it at play, some of it in two unsuccessful newspapers, in which he invested money. He was then twenty-two years old. It is a fine saying of Shakespeare, "in the reproof of chance lies the true proof of men." Without that loss of fortune, probably, nay, almost certainly, we should never have had Thackeray's contributions to English literature. He was, by nature, very indolent, and required the spur of necessity to urge him to his destined course. He looked about him for his work in the world. At first he thought of adopting art as a profession, and proposed, unsuccessfully, to illustrate one of Dickens's books, then appearing in monthly numbers. Gradually it came home to him that literature, not art, was his true vocation. Some of his earliest work appears to have been done for *Fraser's Magazine.* He appears side by side with Coleridge and Carlyle, in Maclise's picture of the contributors to that journal, published with the number for January, 1835. In 1836 he married. He was then twenty-five years of age. I will read the account he gives of his marriage in a letter written long afterwards.

> "I married at your age, with £400 paid by a newspaper which failed six months afterwards, and always love to hear of a young fellow testing his fortune bravely in that way. If I can see my way to help you, I will. Though my marriage was a wreck, as you know, I would do it over again, for behold Love is the crown and completion of all earthly good. A man who is afraid of his fortune never deserved one. I wish you the very best. The very best and pleasantest house I ever knew in my life had but £300 to keep it."

Thackeray's happiness in his marriage appears to have been unmixed. But out of it was to come a far more terrible trouble than his loss of fortune. In 1840 Mrs. Thackeray lost her reason. From that time she had to live apart from her husband, whom she survived for many years. No greater sorrow could have befallen Thackeray, a man of singularly warm affections, of most tender and sensitive heart. Writing shortly afterwards to a friend, whose wife had recently died, he says, "A dead sorrow is better than a living one," surely one of the most pathetic laments ever uttered. But the effect of this living sorrow was to deepen and strengthen his character. He had his children to provide for.

He had his own work in the world to find and to do. He sought it diligently, and did it with all his might. His literary apprenticeship, as I may call it, before he was recognized as master of his craft, lasted some twelve or thirteen years. They were years of unremitting labour. Necessity was laid upon him. In 1841 Edward Fitzgerald writes, "Have you read Thackeray's little book, *The Second Funeral of Napoleon?* If not, pray do; and buy it, as each copy sold puts sevenpence halfpenny into Thackeray's pocket, which is not very heavy just now, I take it." In 1844 Fitzgerald describes him as "writing hard for half a dozen reviews and newspapers all the morning; dining, drinking, and talking at night; managing to preserve a fresh colour and perpetual flow of spirits under a wear and tear of thinking and feeding that would have knocked up any other man I know, two years ago at least." How good, on the whole, his work belonging to this period is, I need hardly say. One cannot but wonder that its merit was so little recognized. Even *Barry Lyndon*, which is certainly a masterpiece, attracted little notice when it first appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1844. In 1845 we find Macvey Napier, then editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, inquiring of Hayward whether Thackeray was likely to be good for a light article for that journal. It was in 1846 that Thackeray began, in *Punch*, the *Snob Papers*, which were said to have made the reputation, both of *Punch* and of himself.

And here let me say a word, in passing, about this *Book of Snobs*, which I regard as a masterpiece of humour. Its playfulness is, of course, of the satiric kind. The keen and vivacious satire of an accomplished man of the world is Thackeray's distinctive note as a humourist. The picture which the *Book of Snobs* presents does not pretend to strict accuracy. No satirist is tied to exact presentment of the facts. You remember the demand which the humourist in *As You Like It* makes for himself—

> "I must have liberty
> Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
> To blow on whom I will; for so fools have; . . .
> Invest me in my motley; give me leave
> To speak my mind, and I will, through and through,
> Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
> If they will patiently receive my medicine."

There is exaggeration, there is caricature, in the *Book of Snobs*. But it is substantially true. It is a very direct, a very amusing, and I will add, a very philosophical indictment of a specially English vice—a dominant vice, we may say, of the English mind, an unreasonable deference for artificial superiorities. But Taine is grotesquely in error in supposing that Thackeray was a leveller, that he desired to reduce society to an enforced and unnatural uniformity. He knew perfectly well that society is necessarily hierarchical. He saw clearly that the right divine of true and natural superiority is indefeasible; he saw, with equal clearness, that the undivine right of false and artificial superiority is doomed. Of gentle birth and cultivated tastes, Thackeray was, in the best sense of the word, aristocratic. That did not in the least prevent him from recognizing that the old order of caste and privilege was gone. He knew well that the great French Revolution, which had become a European, a world-wide revolution, meant so much. In words which M. Taine has quoted from the *Book of Snobs*, Thackeray observes — with entire truth —that the problem lying before the world is the organization of equality. Mark the word "organization," which means "forming organically." Thackeray was perfectly well aware that society is an organism: not a chaotic mass of equivalent human units; and that in every organism we must have complexity, differentiation, gradation, subordination. For the rest, it must be remembered that in his maturer life, Thackeray recognized the language of his earlier ardour in the *Book of Snobs* as too vehement. To which I may add that he was not singular in his failure to discern the importance of the principle of heredity. Hardly any one then recognized it. Certain it is, however, that the *Book of Snobs* did a vast deal of practical good. It helped to abate the meanness, the servility, the vulgarity, which it painted in such vivid colours.

*Vanity Fair* appeared in January, 1847, a date ever memorable to Thackeray, for it marked his advent from obscurity and poverty to fame and comparative affluence. Mrs. Carlyle, after reading a few numbers of it, wrote to her husband, "Very good, indeed. Beats Dickens out of the world." Certainly it stamped its author as one of the greatest painters of manners that has ever adorned our literature. The simpleness and directness with which the story is told, the naturalness with which the incidents follow one another, the easy vigour with which the action is carried on, revealed the consummate literary artist. Perhaps in *Vanity Fair* the characters are more sharply and deeply cut than in any other of his works; perhaps in it his delicate and sensitive apprehension of the distinguishing traits of human nature, is most fully displayed. But his later books—I need not dwell upon them, as they are so familiar to us all—worthily sustained the reputation which *Vanity Fair* achieved. [*Esmond*, I suppose, is generally accounted the most perfect, artistically, of his fictions. Certainly nowhere is the master's touch lighter and surer. I should say it is the truest book ever written in an essentially false style; for so I, personally, account the historical novel. It is notable how again and again in *Esmond* the spirit of the nineteenth century breaks out through the phraseology and costumes and general life environment of the eighteenth.

We are of our age, and cannot help ourselves. We look at another age with larger eyes than the men and women who lived in it.

Before, however, I quit the consideration of Thackeray's literary art, there are two observations which I should like to make; two which, indeed, run into one. The first is that his singular perfection of style—unequalled by any contemporary writer, Carlyle judged—came from his supreme veracity. He possessed the great, the rare gift of precise expression. The phrase fits the thought as a well-made glove the hand. I add that the intrinsic charm of his stories comes from this same gift of veracity. Thackeray was a serious observer of life and of the play of the passions, without the least tendency to melodrama. There are no plots in his novels, any more than there are in Balzac's. His fictions are, as a rule, perfectly adapted to reason and to the general aspect of life. He depicted society as he saw it, with supreme truthfulness—that is, so far as he dared. There were sides of it which he dared not depict, unlike Balzac, "qui cherchait et osait tout," as George Sand truly said. Like Balzac, too, he is fond of minutiæ. It may be said of him, as of that great master, "Il décrit trop." But how admirably his descriptions are done! His observation is conducted with so fine an art, that one hardly knows where reality ends and fiction begins. It is not the likeness of mechanical copying, such as the photographer gives, but the luminous and captivating picture of an artist, who creates. The phenomena of social life left a clear image on his mind. And he reproduces that image with admirable force and picturesqueness. There are however passages in his works—this is not generally recognized—which exhibit him as a no less excellent painter of landscape than of portrait. Let me read one which depicts, very vividly, a scene familiar, doubtless, to most here.

"Pleasant Rhine gardens! Fair scenes of peace and sunshine; noble purple mountains, whose crests are reflected in the magnificent stream; who has ever seen you that has not a grateful memory of those scenes of friendly repose and beauty? To lay down the pen, and even to think of beautiful Rhineland, makes one happy. At this time of summer evening the cows are trooping down from the hills, lowing, and with their bells tinkling, to the old town, with its old moats, and gates, and spires, and chestnut trees, with long blue shadows stretching over the grass; the sky and the river below flame in crimson and gold; and the moon is already out, looking pale towards the sunset. The sun sinks behind the great castle-crested mountains; the night falls suddenly; the river grows darker and darker; lights quiver in it from the windows in the old ramparts, and twinkle peacefully in the villages under the hills on the opposite shore."

I call that an admirable bit of *paysage*. It is like a landscape of Nicolas Poussin.

But—this is my special concern to-day—we have in Thackeray a type of The Humourist as Philosopher. Thackeray then, I would remark, draws for us no *individuum vagum*, but man the social animal, the ethical animal, as he lives and moves and has his being, with his aims, affections, affectations, afflictions, in civil society, which, again, is an ethical organism. Thackeray paints life, I say, as it is. And he knew well that human existence rests upon elementary moralities, upon primary ethical verities. His books are his experiences of life, his observations of life, his meditations on life, dramatized, so to speak, and put upon his mimic stage. And the ethos of the drama is ethical. He is ever a moral philosopher. I do not, of course, ascribe to him philosophy in the narrow and technical sense of the word. I question whether he had ever looked into a book of metaphysics; whether he would even have understood the terms we use in discussing metaphysical questions. He was a philosopher in the wider sense indicated by Plato in a famous passage of the fifth book of the *Republic*—the sense of a genuine lover of wisdom, of an eager student of real existence; and his philosophy of life—*Lebensphilosophie*—comes into special prominence in all his writings, and is his distinguishing characteristic. The love of moralizing was very strong in him. He calls himself, as we saw in the last Lecture, "the week-day preacher." His philosophy is what I may term intuitional, anticipated, unsystematized philosophy. He has a serious view of life—*Weltanschauung*, as the Germans say—and he ever keeps it before him. M. Taine regards this as a capital blemish. I consider it a peculiar merit.

I shall inquire, presently, of what kind Thackeray's philosophy of life was. First let me say what it was not. There are those—Taine is among them—who find him a misanthrope; a charge which, by the way, was brought against Balzac. The accusation seems to me wholly unjust in both cases. To speak of Thackeray merely, he drew the world around him as he saw it, extenuating nothing, but, assuredly, setting down nothing in malice. He saw clearly enough—as who that has eyes must not see?—the seamy side of society: its littleness, its meanness, its selfishness, its baseness, its false religionism, its secret impurities—in a word which sums all up, its worldliness. I remember hearing a very learned and pious divine, the late Father Dalgairns, once tell a particularly smart congregation, "society is the devil's church." I do not know whether Thackeray would have gone so far as that. Certainly, however, *Vanity Fair* might stand as the title of every one of his books. But clearly as he saw, and vividly as he painted, the seamy side of society, he was no misanthrope, as Taine fancies. He saw with equal clearness, and painted with equal vividness, the truth and incorruptness, the purity and goodness, the love and pity which exist side by side with the abounding evil. He discerned in these things the real goods of human existence, and felt for them that reverence which Ruskin has happily called "the chief joy and power of life." Taine seems to me particularly unhappy in calling him a disciple of Swift. In my judgment there is hardly anything in common between his genial humour and the *sæva indignatio*, the savage wrath, of that arch-inquisitor of human nature. Pungent as his satire often was, the man was overflowing with the milk of human kindness. "If Fun is good, Truth is still better, and Love is the best of all," are the words with which he concludes his *Book of Snobs.* They seem to me an accurate expression of his mind.

Again, I cannot agree with Taine in his complaint—which has been made by hundreds of others—that the good people in Thackeray, if I may so call them, are contemptible and uninteresting. Colonel Newcome, George Warrington, nay, even Arthur Pendennis, particularly interest me as admirable specimens of what I take to be the best kind of man now extant on this planet, the English gentleman. And then his women, his good women. Surely Amelia Sedley is the very type of all that is "pure womanly:" Laura, in her "finished chasten'd purity," "the queen of marriage;" while in Ethel Newcome we have "a perfect woman, nobly planned, to guide, to counsel, and command." Thackeray, happily, lived at a time before the strong-minded woman had come into fashion—at a time when it was generally received and believed that "woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse."

But I am treading on dangerous ground. Let me go on to notice another of Taine's complaints of Thackeray, whom he finds a cynic. The complaint is echoed by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. I confess it seems to me that those who make it, speak unadvisedly with their lips; that they have not realized what a cynic is. I find no cynicism in Thackeray's pages. If you want to see what real cynicism is, take up *Candide*. In that incomparably witty book you have a perfect specimen of it. There Voltaire, under pretence of stripping off our illusions, strips us of our primary moral sympathies, of our fundamental ethical beliefs. But it is precisely to those sympathies and beliefs that Thackeray appeals, "those high instincts," as Wordsworth calls them in magnificent verse familiar, doubtless, to all here—

> "High instincts, before which our mortal Nature
> Did tremble, like a guilty Thing surprised,"

and which are the most certain of all our certainties. To those sympathies, beliefs, instincts, I say, Thackeray ever appealed, to recall us from the worship of Mammon, the worship of rank, the worship of notoriety, to the worship of goodness, and truth, and love. Nor is it true, as Taine complains, that he has turned the novel into mere satire. True it is that in him we have a satirist who, to quote Pope's description of Horace, "without method talks us into sense." But true it is also that beneath his satire, there are springs of tenderness and pathos which are ever welling up. He is full of those "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." He knew well that we apprehend moral verities not only with the intellect, but also with the heart; *σὺν ὅλῇ τῇ ψυχῇ*, as the Greeks said; with the whole of our spiritual being. Nor let it be objected that he presents us with nothing better than trite moralities, "copy-book maxims." Sidney Smith, in whom the very voice of common sense seems often to speak, has happily said, "It is the calling of great men not so much to preach new truths, as to rescue from oblivion those old truths which it is our wisdom to remember and our weakness to forget."

And now let us ask of what kind was his moral philosophy. I answer, that it seems to me to breathe the spirit of Immanuel Kant. We may be quite sure that Thackeray had never read one line of that master. But, as it was said of

Descartes that he ruled the thought of the seventeenth century, so we may say that Kant rules the thought of the nineteenth century. Despite the repellingness of his style—surely one of the most abominable styles that any man ever wrote—Kant's philosophy has penetrated everywhere. There is hardly any poet, any critic, any historian, any writer of any kind of our day, in whom his influence may not be traced. Thackeray's philosophy of life I find underlain by three great philosophical principles which most probably he could not have formulated, and which are distinctly Kantian. The first is the cardinal truth of human personality, regarded, you will remember, by Kant as a postulate of the reason, belonging to the intelligible world beyond space and time. Consider this passage of *Pendennis.*

> "Thus, O friendly readers, we see how every man in the world has his own private griefs and business, by which he is more cast down or occupied than by the affairs or sorrows of any other person. While Mrs. Pendennis is disquieting herself about losing her son, and that anxious hold she has had of him, as long as he remained in the mother's nest, whence he is about to take flight into the great world beyond—while the major's great soul chafes and frets, inwardly vexed as he thinks what great parties are going on in London, and that he might be sunning himself in the glances of dukes and duchesses, but for those cursed affairs which keep him in a wretched little

country hole—while Pen is tossing between his passion and a more agreeable sensation, unacknowledged yet, but swaying him considerably, namely, his longing to see the world—Mr. Smirke has a private care watching at his bedside, and sitting behind him on his pony; and is no more satisfied than the rest of us. How lonely we are in the world! how selfish and secret, everybody! You and your wife have pressed the same pillow for forty years and fancy yourselves united.—Psha! Does she cry out when you have the gout, or do you lie awake when she has the toothache? Your artless daughter, seemingly all innocence and devoted to her mamma and her piano-lesson, is thinking of neither, but of the young lieutenant with whom she danced at the last ball—the honest frank boy, just returning from school, is secretly speculating upon the money you will give him, and the debts he owes the tart-man. The old grandmother crooning in the corner and bound to another world within a few months, has some business or cares which are quite private and her own—very likely she is thinking of fifty years back, and that night when she made such an impression, and danced a cotillion with the captain before your father proposed for her; or, what a silly little over-rated creature your wife is, and how absurdly you are infatuated about her—and, as for your wife—O philosophic reader, answer and say,—Do you tell *her* all? Ah, sir—a distinct universe walks about under your hat and under mine—all things in nature are different to each—the woman we look at has not the same features, the dish we eat from has not the same taste to the one and the other—you and I are but a pair of infinite isolations, with some fellow-islands a little more or less near to us."

The last sentence seems to me to bring out most powerfully a view of human personality which a metaphysician would of course state somewhat differently, but which is as substantially true as it is powerfully expressed.

Next, I find Thackeray holding fast to the great verity that life is a state of moral probation. Kant's doctrine—it is the very kernel of his ethical philosophy — is that knowledge is not man's highest attribute; that the will is higher than the understanding; that practice is higher than theory. "Man, limited strictly as a cognitive being (ein erkennendes Wesen) to the world of sense, reaches as an agent (ein handelndes Wesen) far beyond: nay"—mark the words—"nay, makes proof of his higher nature in this, that he erects himself above the world of sense. Therein consists his autonomy or freedom." Now, probably most of my hearers will remember a very interesting passage in *Pendennis*, where Arthur Pendennis expresses complete moral scepticism, scepticism as to all first principles. Let us hear Thackeray on that.

"In these speculations and confessions of Arthur, the reader may perhaps see allusions to questions which, no doubt, have occupied and discomposed himself, and which he may have answered by very different solutions to those come to by our friend. We are not pledging ourselves for the correctness of his opinions, which readers will please to consider are delivered dramatically, the writer being no more answerable for them, than for the sentiments uttered by any other character of the story; our endeavour is merely to follow out, in its progress, the development of the mind of a worldly and selfish, but not ungenerous or unkind or truth-avoiding man. And it will be seen that the lamentable stage to which his logic at present has brought him, is one of general scepticism and sneering acquiescence in the world as it is; or if you like so to call it, a belief qualified with scorn in all things extant. The tastes and habits of such a man prevent him from being a boisterous demagogue, and his love of truth and dislike of cant keep him from advancing crude propositions, such as many loud reformers are constantly ready with; much more of uttering downright falsehoods in urging questions or abusing opponents, which he would die or starve rather than use. It was not in our friend's nature to be able to utter certain lies; nor was he strong enough to protest against others, except with a polite sneer; his maxim being, that he owed obedience to all Acts of Parliament, as long as they were not repealed.

"And to what does this easy and sceptical life lead a man? Friend Arthur was a Sadducee, and the Baptist might be in the wilderness shouting to the poor, who were listening with all their might and faith to the preacher's awful denunciations of wrath, or woe, or salvation; and our friend the Sadducee would turn his sleek mule with a shrug and a smile from the crowd, and go home to the shade of his terrace, and muse over preacher and audience, and turn to his roll of Plato, or his pleasant Greek song-book babbling of honey and Hybla, and nymphs and fountains of love. To what, we say, does this scepticism lead? It leads a man to a shameful loneliness and selfishness, so to speak, the more shameful, because it is so good-humoured and conscienceless and serene. Conscience! What is conscience? Why accept remorse? What is public or private faith? Mythuses alike enveloped in enormous tradition. If, seeing and acknowledging the lies of the world, Arthur, as see them you can with only too fatal a clearness, you submit to them without any protest further than a laugh; if, plunged yourself in easy sensuality, you allow the whole wretched world to pass groaning by you unmoved; if the fight for the truth is taking place, and all men of honour are on the ground armed on the one side or the other, and you alone are to lie on your balcony and smoke your pipe out of the noise and the danger,—you had better have died, or never have been at all, than such a sensual coward."

Thackeray goes on to tell us how Arthur would answer these reflections. The tirade ends by Pen observing to George Warrington, "And so, George, if ever you hear of my marrying, depend upon it, it won't be a romantic attachment on my side." And Warrington replies, "Oh, Pen, you scoundrel, I know what you mean. This is the meaning of your scepticism, your quietism, your atheism. My poor fellow, you are going to sell yourself, and Heaven help you! You are going to make a bargain which will degrade you and make you miserable for life." Yes, that was really the explanation. Pen had made up his mind to marry for wealth and position a woman to whom he bore no affection. And this treason to his higher nature, this disloyalty to the monitor within, this willing captivity to the world of sense, had obscured his whole moral being; and all his mind was clouded with a doubt.

Again, Thackeray felt in his inmost soul that human life is inadequate to satisfy human aspirations; that at the bottom of everything, in the phenomenal order, is that "inexorable ennui" of which Bossuet speaks. Is there no way from the phenomenal into the noumenal? from that which seems to that which is? Kant judged that the realization of the highest good which the ethical faculty prescribes, implies an order above nature. There *must* be, he argues, a life beyond the phenomenal where the triumph of the moral law will be assured, where its rewards and penalties shall be adequately realized; there *must* be a Supreme Moral Governor who will bring about that triumph. It appears to me that some such conviction as this was to Thackeray an anchor of the soul—sure and steadfast. It breathes throughout his writings. I find it most shortly and simply stated in one of his letters. "I don't know about the unseen world. The use of this world is the right thing, I am sure . . . waiting for the completion of my senses and the fulfilment of His intention towards me, afterwards, when this scene closes over me." The thought expressed in this artless language underlies, I think, many passages in his books.

Thackeray, after all, was a doubter, then, does any one object? Well, there is a fruitful doubt, as there is a fruitful grief. Of Thackeray we may surely say—

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
He slowly beat his music out:
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Or take the words of the great humourist regarding whom I shall speak next week—

"By desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is, and cannot do what we would, we are part of the Divine Power against evil, widening the skirts of light, and making the struggle with darkness narrower."

That, I think, correctly expresses the highest aspect of Thackeray's work.

# LECTURE III.

## THE HUMOURIST AS POET.

### *GEORGE ELIOT.*

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### *GEORGE ELIOT.*

SIR TOBY BELCH, in *Twelfth Night*, inquires, "Do not our lives consist of the four elements?" "'Faith, so they say," replies Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking." These words have come down to us from the sixteenth century, or it may be the seventeenth: I believe the date of *Twelfth Night* is a vexed question. But I suppose they hold good of the nineteenth. At all events, a poet of our own age, and no mean poet, has given us a picture of every-day existence not very different from that sketched by Sir Andrew—

> "What is the course of the life
> Of mortal men on the earth?
> Most men eddy about
> Here and there—eat and drink,
> Chatter and love and hate,
> Gather and squander, are raised
> Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
> Striving blindly, achieving
> Nothing; and then they die—
> Perish! and no one asks
> Who or what they have been;

> More than he asks what waves
> In the moonlit solitude wild
> Of the midmost ocean have swelled,
> Foamed for a moment, and gone."

Is not this witness true? Deeply corporealized, imprisoned by the senses, do we not resemble those unhappy men of whom Plato tells us in his famous apologue? There they sit, and have sat since childhood, those miserable captives, in their underground cavernous prison, with no opening save one above towards the light, fast bound in misery and iron, not able so much as to turn their heads, and so seeing nothing but what is straight before them. At a distance above and behind them, a bright fire burns, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way with a low wall built along it, like the screen which the marionette players in ancient Greece were wont to put up in front of their audiences, and above which they displayed their puppets. Behind this wall walk a number of persons bearing vessels and images of wood and stone and various other materials, talking as they go. And the captives, sitting without the power of turning their heads, see their own shadows—which is all they see of themselves and each other—and the shadows cast by these objects upon the part of the cavern facing them, and hear the voices thence reverberated, for there is an echo in their prison-house. And they refer these voices, not to the unseen passers-by, of whom they have no knowledge, but to the passing shadows, which they take for realities. Strange and weird conception! But how true an image of human life till we are enfranchised from the chains of sense. "Passing shadows." Are not these the things which all of us for some period of our lives, some of us for our whole lives, take for realities? There is a profound remark of Emerson, "All that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a shadow, until the heart be touched." It is that touch which sets us free, lifting for us, as the authors of the *Upanishads* would say, the veil of Mâya, ridding us of illusions about the make and matter of the phenomenal world, revealing to us, as the only true facts essential and eternal, ideas of which phenomena are the accidental and transitory reflections.

> "Letting us pent-up creatures through
> Into eternity, our due."

Now this touch of the heart may come to us in several ways. The most universal instrument of it is religion. I use the word in its most general sense. I mean by it not the form of faith which may commend itself to you or to me, but the transcendental mode of the soul which underlies all forms of faith; the heart religion of John Wesley, the Everlasting Yea of Carlyle. I need not dwell on what is so familiar. But this touch of the heart may come to us through external nature. There, too, is a path for those who can find it, into the transcendental. I remember vividly—and many here, doubtless, have similar experiences—how in an autumn afternoon of singular loveliness, which seems to rise before me across the gulf of years, Nature was first revealed to me as a living reality, a spirit meeting with my spirit, "a Presence which is not to be put by." I can now see those magnificent woods through which I wandered with my eyes opened and my ears unstopped, so to speak, for the first time, finding "tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks;" hearing in the moaning of the winds the elegy of the dying year, nay, the burial hymn of the world; reading for the first time the high moralities and stern, the "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," inscribed on the falling foliage and the fading flowers. Art, again, has the same high revelatory function. I do not know who has brought out this truth better than Schopenhauer, one of the finest and subtlest spirits of our age, however much his system as a whole may repel us. The function of art, this profound and bitter thinker considers, is the deliverance of man from the chain of vulgar illusions binding us to the phenomenal world, by presenting the things that have veritable being, the permanent, essential forms immutable and ever true. Art is really one, however the artist manifest his gift. There are diversities of operation, but the same spirit. The true artist is a seer. He is the man whose eyes are opened. His mission, whether he use painting or sculpture, "the concord of sweet sounds," or ordered words, is to body forth the forms of things unknown which have been revealed to him. Hence art, like nature, is essentially religious, in the highest signification of the word. A man's eyes must be holden that they see not, if he can regard himself as the measure of all things, when standing by the sea, or on the mountains, or under a starlit sky: or when gazing at Raphael's Transfiguration, or looking around him in the cathedral of Chartres, or reading the *Divine Comedy*, or *Hamlet*, or *Faust*.

But the form of art which appeals most widely—the highest form Aristotle considers it, and I think rightly—is, no doubt, the poetic. And perhaps the function of poetry is now of ever-growing importance. Hitherto poetry has been largely the handmaid of the theologies of the world. Thus in ancient Hellas the tragedians were the exponents of the theological traditions of their country. In their plays we have those traditions dramatized and clothed in poetic forms of consummate and imperishable beauty. Dante is the poetic theologian of mediæval Catholicism. Milton is the poetic theologian of modern Puritanism. In this age, as a matter of fact, and apart from all theories, theologies have largely lost their hold upon the general mind in many countries. Thus, to give one example, even in Scotland—"broad Scotland, Bible-loving Scotland," as it used to be called—the cultured classes, who in the long run lead the rest, after passing through a stage of literature and dogma, appear to have reached a stage of literature without dogma. Now, to many judicious observers it seems that in these changed conditions of men's spiritual and intellectual life, poetry will occupy some of the ground lost by dogmatic religious teaching. And so Professor Tyndall, in his *Fragments of Science*, writes, "I think the poet will have a great part to play in the future of the world. . . . To him it is given for a long time to fill the shores which the recession of the theologic tide has left bare." The professor's metaphor is a little puzzling. But his meaning clearly is that we shall have to look to poetry, mainly, for arousing and disciplining the nobler emotions; for lifting us above the senses; for idealizing life; for preserving us from that spiritual dryness which, as I remarked in my First Lecture, is a special danger of the age.

It is, perhaps, open to question whether, if we survey the world at large, the theologic tide which Professor Tyndall saw ebbing, as he thought for good and all, has not begun to flow again, and that with a certain strength, even, since the time he thus wrote. But without discussing that matter, we may agree, I think, with the Professor, that the poet will have a great part to play in the future of the world. Indeed, I should say that he plays a great part in the present. I add that in these days—so it seems to me—the most widely influential poets are those who do not employ metrical forms. We must remember that the essential conditions of true imaginative literature, whether it uses those forms or not, are the same. Verse, no doubt, was originally intended to be sung. The Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θέα of Homer, the "Arma virumque cano" of Virgil, witness to a truth of fact. Rhythm and rhyme were employed originally as aids to the memory, as augmentations of tunefulness. But, as Aristotle tells us in the *Poetics*, the essence of true poetry is not metrical form. That is but an accident. No doubt music is an essential element of poetry. But there is a deeper music than that of metre or rhyme, which are, in Aristotle's phrase, mere ἡδύσματα, literally, seasonings; added charms, we may say. There is the music of winged words, of picturesque phrases, of stately sentences, which we find as much in prose of a certain order, as in verse. You remember the lines of Wordsworth—

"O many are the poets that are sown
By Nature: men adorned with highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine:
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse."

We may have the finest poetry without poetic metres. Consider, for example, the *Psalms of David*, as we read them, whether in the Roman *Breviary* or in the Anglican *Prayer-book*, the *Book of Job*, whether in St. Jerome's Latin or in the

English of King James's translators, or innumerable passages in the great prose writers, whether of our own or any other nation.

It is worth while to enlarge a little upon this. Truth has two modes of expression; the language of fact, and the language of fancy; the tongue of the phenomenal, and the tongue of the ideal. The common antithesis between poetry and prose is misleading. Shelley calls it "a vulgar error." There is much so-called prose which is excellent unmetrical poetry. There is much so-called poetry which is villainous prose in metre. It is a dictum of Sir Philip Sidney, "One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry." The true antithesis is between prose and verse. A canon of my own in judging verse is that no man has a right to put into metre what he can as well say out of metre. To which I may add, as a corollary, that *a fortiori* he has no right to put into metre what he can better say out of metre. Now I think that in the present day the vast majority of our poets should be content to be unmetrical. It appears to me that for a long time to come, the novelist, according to his inspiration and in proportion to his power, is likely to be the most popular, the most successful preacher of ideal truth, the most effectual interpreter of the supersensuous interests of humanity. Wordsworth, writing in the year 1815, observes, "Few persons will deny that of two descriptions either of passions, manners, or characters, equally well executed, the one in prose, the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once." Well, we have changed all that now. Since these words were written the schoolmaster has been abroad and—I will not say education, a word generally misused, but—the art of reading has been widely diffused. For one reader in Wordsworth's days, there are a thousand readers, at least, in ours. And literature has become democratized. Now to appreciate verse demands much more culture than to appreciate prose. An accurate taste in metrical composition is certainly an acquired faculty. Nay, more, sensibility to harmony of numbers is by no means a very common endowment, as is sufficiently proved by the fact that it is rare to meet with any one who can read verse decently. Most people read it with hardly any regard to modulation, cadence, rhythm, just as if it were prose. In these days we may safely reverse Wordsworth's dictum and say that of two descriptions either of passions, manners, or characters, equally well executed, the one in prose, the other in verse, the prose will be read a hundred times where the verse is read once.

And this leads me to the special work of George Eliot as a humourist. We must certainly consider her a humourist in the fullest sense of the word, as I defined it in my First Lecture; an artist who playfully gives us his intuition of the world and human life. It is a grave playfulness, reminding me a good deal of Socrates, not the Socrates of the *Platonic Dialogues*, but the Socrates of the *Memorabilia*. I shall not, however, analyze her humour and compare it with the playfulness of other humourists; that, as I said in my First Lecture, would be beside my present purpose. I find in her the type of The Humourist as Poet. For her metrical compositions, with just one exception, I care little. They leave me cold. Mr. John Morley has happily characterized them "as majestic in intention and sonorous in execution." Even the lines so hugely admired about

> "the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence"

seem to me—may I say it?—thin in conception, and turgid in expression. I should call her a prose poet who tried to write verse and achieved a very moderate measure of success. There are, indeed, a few stanzas of hers in which she does seem to me to have reached a very high standard of excellence. You remember how in *Middlemarch*, on one fine Sunday morning, Will Ladislaw is walking to Lowick church, attracted thither by a desire, not to hear the eloquence of Mr. Casaubon, but to look upon the face of Dorothea.

Doubts arise in his mind whether Dorothea will like it—he is sure Mr. Casaubon won't, but that gives an additional zest to the expedition. He silences objections, however, by the force of unreason, and proceeds on his way across Halsell Common, revolving in his mind all sorts of tender and tremulous memories, and sweet inarticulate aspirations, and singing to himself as he goes these verses of his own—

"O me, O me, what frugal cheer
  My love doth feed upon!
A touch, a ray, that is not here,
  A shadow that is gone:

"A dream of breath that might be near,
  An inly-echoed tone;
The thought that one may think me dear,
  The place where one was known.

"The tremor of a banished fear,
  An ill that was not done—
O me, O me, what frugal cheer
  My love doth feed upon!"

Now I call those exquisite lines, instinct with a subtle charm, a tender grace, of which I find small trace in *The Spanish Gypsy*, in *Jubal*, in *A College Breakfast Table*. Nay, I will say a bold thing. They seem to me not unworthy of Goethe himself, between whose genius and George Eliot's there is, indeed, a certain affinity.

But this little poem stands by itself in George Eliot's works. It is to her prose and not to her verse that we must turn, if we would see her make proof of her gift as a true poet. Wordsworth—I have not quite done with him yet—has enumerated "six powers requisite for the production of poetry." They are these—

> "First, those of Observation and Description, *i.e.* the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer. Secondly, Sensibility, which, the more exquisite it is, the wider will be the range of a poet's perceptions, and the more will he be incited to observe objects, both as they exist in themselves, and as reacted upon by his own mind. Thirdly, Reflection, which makes the poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts, and feelings; and assists the sensibility in perceiving their connection with each other. Fourthly, Imagination and Fancy, to modify, to create, and to associate. Fifthly, Invention, by which characters are composed out of materials supplied by observation. And lastly, Judgment, to decide how and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted so that the less shall not be sacrificed to the greater, nor the greater, slighting the less, arrogate to its own injury more than its due."

Wordsworth adds, "The materials of poetry, by these powers collected and produced, are cast, by means of various moulds, into divers forms." One of these forms is what he calls The Narrative. And he tells us, "The distinguishing mark [of it] is that the narrator, however liberally his speaking agent be introduced, is himself the source from which everything primarily flows." Now it appears to me that George Eliot possesses all these powers in ample measure. If we compare her with the other two great humourists who have been the subjects of the preceding Lectures, we shall see that she had their faculties of Observation and Description, and more; while she had the faculty Wordsworth calls Sensibility in a degree to which neither of them at all nearly approached. She has, indeed, involuntarily suggested a comparison in this respect between herself and Dickens by certain words of her own. "Dickens," she wrote, "is gifted with the utmost power of rendering the external traits of our town population, and if he could give us their psychological character, their conception of life and their emotions, with the same truth as their manners, his books would be the greatest contribution art has ever made to the awakening of the social sympathies." Now George Eliot was singularly endowed with this psychological power in which, as she justly observes, Dickens was lacking. She could render external truth as well as he; but her characters are drawn from within, not, like his, from without. Her insight is deeper, much deeper, even than Thackeray's, while she had all his vividness of observation, his power of delineation, in her own domain, which was not his domain. Thackeray's psychology fell very short of hers. He quite realized that interior, secret life which each man leads in isolation from his fellows. But George Eliot penetrated far more deeply into it. She had a peculiar gift of her own—unique among English writers of romantic fiction—of drawing the individual character of a living soul, of representing it in its complete relations. And that is a note of high poetic genius. How earnestly she exercised the power of Reflection—the next on Wordsworth's list of poetic gifts—is indicated in a letter of hers to Mr. Frederic Harrison. She speaks there of herself as engaged in the severe effort to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had been revealed to her first in the flesh and blood, and not in the spirit. Imagination and Fancy are written on every one of her pages. With what delicacy and tenderness and power does she handle the most subtle movements of the human affections! And her method, as she tells us, was to begin with minds, thoughts, and passions, and then invent the story for their sakes and fit it to them. Lastly, her Judgment is pre-eminently seen in that æsthetic completeness which she attains, at all events in her earlier and better works. It was hers with truth

> "to correspond, and sink,
> Or rise, as venerable Nature leads."

Hence the moral unity which marks her compositions.

I may here notice that Rubens was her favourite painter, giving her, as she says, "more pleasure than any other painter, whether right or wrong." "His are such real men and women," she adds, "moved by passions, not mincing, and grimacing, and posing in mere imitation of passions." I do not know, however, that I personally should describe George Eliot's inspiration as reminding me of Rubens. There is something in her genius which rather recalls to me the great masters of the Spanish school of painting. Her vivid and strongly drawn characters seem to speak of their energetic art.

So much may suffice to indicate why it is that I regard George Eliot as essentially a poet, expressing for us—this, according to Aristotle, is the function of the true poet—the universal element in human life. And it is noticeable in how many different orders of poetry she has excelled. *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*, *Janet's Repentance*, *Silas Marner*—are there anywhere more exquisite idylls! Where is there more delicious pastoral than in *Adam Bede?* Through it there breathes a freshness as of spring itself. One thinks of the verse of Shakespeare—

> "O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet South
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour."

Where is there more touching elegiac than in the story of Maggie Tulliver? *Middlemarch* has been called, I forget by whom, "a great prose epic;" and the description is not amiss. It is true that in her latter years a sort of scientific pedantry somewhat marred George Eliot's poetic gift. Her biological studies thwarted the true bent of her genius. Art and physical science are two essentially different ways of interpreting nature and man. The scientific novel is an abortion, a monstrosity. But even in *Daniel Deronda*, in spite of much that one could wish away, there is the old inimitable charm of psychology at once exact and delicate, of penetrative pathos, of exquisite sensibility, like Goethe's, to every touch of the world of form, colour, and passion.

? And now let us go on to inquire what is the ethos of George Eliot's prose poetry. I remember to have seen her described—and that by a critic of note—as "the most influential Positivist writer of her age:" and, by another, as "the first great godless writer of fiction that has appeared in England." By "godless," this last-cited authority means—as he explains—"without God, not against Him." George Eliot's writings, he adds, "do not deny, but they silently and skilfully ignore Him." And, by way of example of this, he bids us consider Mr. Tryan and Savonarola. George Eliot, he insists, "contrives to exhibit all she wishes us to admire in Mr. Tryan, as resting on a basis with which his religious beliefs have nothing at all to do;" while "Savonarola is the spokesman of Humanity made divine, not of Divinity made human." The writer from whom I am quoting regards George Eliot's "artistic powers" as "a mere auxiliary to her philosophic powers," and considers that "she has the strongest claim to be judged by her philosophy"—her Positivist philosophy. Now all this seems to me untenable. No doubt George Eliot was—in a sense—a Positivist. I say, "in a sense," because the word is, in truth, very indefinite. It is quite clear that she was not a Positivist in the full meaning of the word, which is, I take it, a professed disciple of Comte. Mr. Cross tells us, in her *Life*, "Her appreciation of Comte was thoroughly selective. Part of his teachings were accepted, and others rejected. It was a limited adherence." And so, writing to Miss Jane Hennell in 1861, she expressed her agreement with her correspondent in thinking Positivism "one-sided." M. Littré's account of the Positivist philosophy is as follows: "The Positivist philosophy is the totality of human knowledge (*l'ensemble du savoir humain*). But how do we define human knowledge? We define it as the study of the forces which belong to matter and of the conditions or laws which govern those forces." Is that a correct account of George Eliot's philosophy? Would she have allowed that our knowledge is bounded by "the forces which belong to matter and the conditions or laws which govern those forces?" I doubt it very much.

Certain it is, indeed, that, early in life, George Eliot was led to reject what has been called "the Christian mythology," and to accept the rationalized account of the Evangelical history given by Strauss, whose best-known work she translated. Afterwards, she fell a great deal under the influence of Mr. Herbert Spencer, of whose ethical doctrines traces may be found, here and there, in her writings; and especially in her *Essays of Theophrastus Such.* I suppose her most distinctively Positivist work—and it is her least successful—is *The Spanish Gypsey.* But, in whatever sense, and with whatever limitations we are to find her a Positivist, assuredly she was not "an influential Positivist writer." The writings in which she has directly expounded her philosophy—such as it was—exercised little influence. And her prose poems — her novels — certainly were not a vehicle for Positivist propagandism. True it is that she is always a thinker. All veritable art rests on thought. But "the essence of thinking is that the right ideas occur at the right time." And, in the artist, the logical understanding holds a subordinate position. Its aids and artifices merely assist and facilitate in the execution of his creative purpose. "To be purely æsthetic, to paint, not to prove," "to glory in what is actually great and beautiful," is

George Eliot's account of her work. And of all beauty, the beauty of holiness is the most soul subduing. The halo of the saints—"divine artists in the moral order"—is a reflection of "the brightness increate" of "the Altogether Lovely." In 1857 George Eliot writes to a friend that she feels "a greater disinclination for theories and arguments, in the presence of all this mystery and beauty and pain and ugliness that flood one with conflicting emotions."

It is, as I hold—in opposition to the critic I quoted just now—precisely by her powers of rendering those emotions, and not by her philosophic powers, that George Eliot has the strongest claims to be judged. And of those emotions the most masterful and the most universal are the religious. These, from first to last, were the chords on which George Eliot struck most mightily. Is it true that in dealing with these, George Eliot ignores the Supreme Object round which they centre? If you recall certain pages of *Janet's Repentance*, of *Adam Bede*, of *Romola*—pages which I do not doubt are in the recollection of every one here—you will find a sufficient answer to the question. To George Eliot, the artist—whatever she may have held as a philosopher—the great Theistic idea was the source of her deepest and most powerful inspiration. The statement that she "contrives to exhibit all she wishes us to admire in

Mr. Tryan, as resting upon a basis with which his religious beliefs have nothing whatever to do," is one of the strangest which I have ever read. You remember Mr. Tryan's simple story. A wrong done in early manhood, to a young girl, becomes to him—as it has become to so many others—a source of lifelong remorse. The last stage on her downward road is soon reached; and it is suicide. A great change is wrought in him. He becomes a clergyman of the Evangelical school—then in the freshness of its fervour—and devotes himself with apostolic zeal to his sacred calling. "I could not rescue Lucy; but by God's blessing I might rescue other weak and falling souls; and that was why I entered the Church." He rescues Janet Dempster, you will remember; rescues her from self-despair: strengthens her with divine hopes: and makes the life she was to lead, for long years after he rested from his labours, "a solemn service of gratitude and patient effort." "The man who has left such a memorial behind him"—these are the words with which George Eliot ends the story—"must have been one whose heart beat with true compassion and whose lips were moved by fervent faith." "Fervent faith." Yes. It is precisely in Mr. Tryan's "religious belief" that George Eliot shows us the source of what she wishes us to admire in him. Then, again, Savonarola, we are told, is "the spokesman of Humanity made divine, not of Divinity made human." Well, but "humanity made divine" is just as much a part of the Christian idea as "Divinity made human." I do not say that George Eliot's Savonarola is precisely the Savonarola of history. But I do say that the words George Eliot puts into Savonarola's mouth, "The higher life begins for us, when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law," express the very essence of Christianity as its greatest saints have ever conceived of it.

It appears to me, then, that Mr. Lewes was well warranted when, in sending George Eliot's first novel to Blackwood, he wrote, "Her tone throughout is sympathetic with religious beliefs," and "not at all antagonistic" to them. Blackwood thought the new author a clergyman, and most of the critics were of the same opinion. It is worth while to recall here a sentence in a letter of George Eliot's to Blackwood, written at the same date: "My irony, so far as I understand myself, is not directed against opinions—against any class of religious views—but against the vices and weaknesses that belong to human nature in any sort of clothing." Many years afterwards, writing to Mrs. Beecher Stowe, she speaks of "the indirect fellowship" one may have with "religious opinions not one's own." And in a letter of a somewhat earlier date she says, "I feel no regret that any one should turn to [the forms and ceremonies of religion] for comfort, if they can find comfort in them. I enjoy them sympathetically myself." Mr. Buckle's "millennial prospect"—the words are her own—"when superstition will vanish and statistics will reign for ever and ever," did not attract her in the least. "The Bible," Mr. Cross tells us, "was a very precious and sacred book to her, not only from early associations, but also from the profound conviction of its importance in the religious life of men." And, next to the Bible, she treasured most Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. There can be no doubt of her deep conviction—a conviction, I think, somewhere expressed by Eduard von Hartmann—that only the transcendental ideas of Christianity could have completed that deepening of the heart which is one of the most precious possessions of modern civilization. And she would do nothing to weaken the hold of those ideas on the popular mind; no, nor upon the mind of any man or woman. She expresses herself strongly, I might say vehemently, in this sense, in a letter to Madam Bodichon, written in 1862. "Please don't ask me, again, not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no faith, to have any negative propagandism in me. In fact, I have very little sympathy with freethinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines." The truth is that, from first to last, George Eliot's was a singularly religious mind, although all existing religious symbols seemed to her insufficient. You remember Renan's account of himself: "Au fond je sens que ma vie est gouvernée par une foi que je n'ai plus." I think that is the true account of George Eliot.

But, further, I observed just now that in the artist the logical understanding does not hold the first place; that its aids and artifices are auxiliary. I add, reverting to a thought on which I touched half an hour ago, that true art is of the nature of inspiration. Eduard von Hartmann seems to me to speak the exact truth when he tells us, in his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, "All eminent artists owe their productions predominantly to the inspiration of their genius, and not to the work of their consciousness, be they, in all other concerns of life, as clear-headed as possible." And again, "A genuine work of art is incommensurable with any rationalistic standard." It is no new doctrine, indeed. The ancients regarded a kind of possession as the distinctive note of the artist. This is "the divine madness" of which Plato speaks in the Phædrus; the "furor poeticus" of Cicero. It is the "fine frenzy" that Shakespeare attributes to the poet. I need not enlarge on what is so familiar, but I should like to read to you a few profound words of that profound thinker Schelling, which are very pertinent in this connection. "Just as the man of destiny does not execute what he wills or intends, but what he is obliged to execute, through an incomprehensible fate, under whose influence he stands, so the artist, however full of design he is, yet, in respect of that which is the properly objective in his production, seems to stand under the influence of a power which separates him from all other men, and compels him to declare or represent things which he himself does not completely see through, and whose import is infinite." Now assuredly this was the case with George Eliot. Indeed, we have her own express testimony that it was. "She told me," Mr. Cross relates, "that in all her best work there was a 'not herself' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting." That is quite sufficient to explain—if explanation be wanted—how we may reconcile the negative conclusions which she held, intellectually, and the vivid realization of Theistic faith, which is so marked a characteristic of her novels. The artist speaks not of himself. We may further say that in this union of Positivism and Mysticism, George Eliot is typical of her age. How many are there who have experienced, who constantly experience, the truth of those verses of Tennyson in which he tells us how the Atheism of the understanding is annihilated by the heart, how we feel—we cannot help ourselves—the Absolute and Eternal, though we may not find Him out.

> "That which we dare invoke to bless;
> Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt:
> He, They, One, All; within, without;
> The Power in darkness whom we guess.
>
> "I found Him not in world or sun,
> Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
> Nor thro' the questions men may try,
> The petty cobwebs we have spun.
>
> "If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
> I heard a voice 'believe no more,'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore,
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> "A warmth within the heart would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

It is that touch, from beyond the veil of phenomena, felt by the heart—I spoke of it in beginning this Lecture—which lets us into eternity and is the surest evidence of things not seen.

So much may suffice to vindicate George Eliot against what seems to me a grave misconception. And now what shall we say is the ethos of her prose poetry? To me it seems to be essentially that of the tragedians of ancient Hellas: "those wise old spirits," we may call them, with Jeremy Taylor, "who preserved natural reason and religion in the midst of heathen darkness." "My function," she herself said, "is that of the æsthetic, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions." Now that was precisely the function of Æschylus, of Sophocles, of Euripides. The work of those great masters was to bring out the deep truths which lived in the antique legends:

"Presenting Thebes and Pelops' line,
And the tale of Troy divine:"

to reset them in the forms furnished by creative genius: to present the stern facts of human life transfigured and idealized; and thus, as Aristotle puts it, to cleanse the soul by pity and terror. George Eliot treats similarly incidents, emotions, passions of ordinary life. Her work was of the same order as that of those wise old spirits. But she has most in common with Euripides.

"Euripides the human—with his droppings of warm tears,
And his touchings of things common till they seem to touch the spheres."

In mastery of the emotions, in truthfulness to life, in deep religiousness of nature, Euripides and George Eliot strikingly resemble one another. George Eliot's themes are the pity and pathos, the terror and tenderness of everyday existence. Her pages breathe "the still sad music of humanity." From them

"Seems surging the Virgilian cry,
The sense of tears in mortal things."

Her work is essentially tragedy. She knew well that sadness is a great sacrament, a fount of purification, a dipping of the soul in lustral waters. She knew, too, that happiness is like the light: that it needs the dark background of chaos and the inane for its gorgeous colouring. The spirit in which George Eliot's work is done is in itself a protest against evil. And in exhibiting to us the play of the great elemental passions of humanity, always full of strife and suffering, she suggests to us severe lessons, which we may formulate for ourselves.

But, further, the deep underlying thought of Greek tragedy—and this is especially true of Æschylus—is the absolute and indefeasible claim of the divine law upon our obedience, and the inexorableness of its penal sanctions. That, too, is the deep underlying thought of George Eliot. What account she gave to herself of that law, I do not know, nor do I greatly care. But the feeling that in the moral world, as in the physical, "nothing is that errs from law," law fenced about, as all law is, by punishments—for a law that may be broken with impunity is no law at all—that is the august verity ever present to the mind of George Eliot. You remember the verses of Goethe—

> "Nach ewigen, ehrnen,
> Grossen Gesetzen,
> Müssen wir alle
> Unseres Daseyns
> Kreise vollenden."

Yes: "müssen wir alle." Those laws of life we must obey, or incur the retribution which by the nature of things attends their violation.

Lord Acton has well observed, "From the bare diagram of Brother Jacob, to the profound and finished picture of *Middlemarch*, retribution is the constant theme and motive of George Eliot's art." No Buddhist with his doctrine of *Karma*, could have more vividly apprehended, more firmly grasped, more effectively inculcated, the stern truth that we cannot escape from the consequences of our past selves; that as we read in the Pâli *Dhammapada* "evil deeds must bear evil fruits;" there is no help for it: that "if a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage;" that punishment is, in Hegel's striking phrase, the other half of crime, naturally and inevitably following it: a debt contracted by it which must be paid off. Such was George Eliot's conception of the inexorableness of the moral law and of its tremendous sanctions. She felt in her inmost being the great verity formulated by Kant —although, I think, she was not versed in his ethical philosophy—that there is something in the idea of our Practical Reason which accompanies the transgression of a moral law, namely, the idea of punishment due to the transgression. And this august verity informs all her novels, and renders them of singular value in an age of sickly sentimentalism, like our own.

Let us glance—it is all we have time to do—at two of George Eliot's works in which this truth is at the very centre of the fable. And first consider *Adam Bede*, which I have always regarded as the high-water mark of her genius. You remember that inimitable picture of Hetty as we see her for the first time in Mrs. Poyser's dairy. I suppose I have read it a hundred times. I intend now to read it again for the hundred and first. It is "a joy for ever," so beautiful is it. Some fresh charm comes out upon every fresh perusal.

"The dairy was certainly worth looking at: it was a scene to sicken for with a sort of calenture in hot and dusty streets—such coolness, such fresh fragrance of new-pressed cheese, of firm butter, of wooden vessels perpetually bathed in pure water; such soft colouring of red earthenware and creamy surfaces, brown wood and polished tin, grey limestone and rich orange-red rust on the iron weights and hooks and hinges. But one gets only a confused notion of these details when they surround a distractingly pretty girl of seventeen standing on little pattens and rounding her dimpled arm to lift a pound of butter out of the scale.

"Hetty blushed a deep rose-colour when Captain Donnithorne entered the dairy and spoke to her; but it was not at all a distressed blush, for it was inwreathed with smiles and dimples, and with sparkles from under long curled dark eye-lashes; and while her aunt was discoursing to him about the limited amount of milk that was to be spared for butter and cheese so long as the calves were not weaned, and a large quantity but inferior quality of milk yielded by the shorthorn, which had been bought on experiment, together with other matters which must be interesting to a young gentleman who would one day be a landlord, Hetty tossed and patted her pound of butter with quite a self-possessed, coquettish air, slily conscious that no turn of her head was lost.

"There are various orders of beauty, causing men to make fools of themselves in various styles, from the desperate to the sheepish; but there is one order of beauty which seems made to turn the heads, not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women. It is a beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies just beginning to toddle, and to engage in conscious mischief—a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you. Hetty Sorrel's was that sort of beauty. Her aunt, Mrs. Poyser, who professed to despise all personal attractions, and intended to be the severest of mentors, continually gazed at Hetty's charms by the sly, fascinated in spite of herself; and after administering such a scolding as naturally flowed from her anxiety to do well by her husband's niece—who had no mother of her own to scold her, poor thing!—she would often confess to her husband, when they were safe out of hearing, that she firmly believed 'the naughtier the little huzzy behaved, the prettier she looked.'

"It is of little use for me to tell you that Hetty's cheek was like a rose-petal, that dimples played about her pouting lips, that her large dark eyes hid a soft roguishness under their long lashes, and that her curly hair, though all pushed back under her round cap while she was at work, stole back in dark delicate rings on her forehead, and about her white shell-like ears; it is of little use for me to say how lovely was the contour of her pink-and-white neckerchief, tucked into her low plum-coloured stuff bodice, or how the linen butter-making apron, with its bib, seemed a thing to be imitated in silk by duchesses, since it fell in such charming lines, or how her brown stockings and thick-soled, buckled shoes lost all that clumsiness which they must certainly have had when empty of her foot and ankle;—of little use, unless you have seen a woman who affected you as Hetty affected her beholders, for otherwise, though you might conjure up the image of a lovely woman, she would not in the least resemble that distracting kitten-like maiden. I might mention all the divine charms of a bright spring day, but if you had never in your life utterly forgotten yourself in straining your eyes after the mounting lark, or in wandering through the still lanes when the fresh-opened blossoms fill them with a sacred, silent beauty like that of fretted aisles, where would be the use of my descriptive catalogue? I could never make you know what I meant by a bright spring day. Hetty's was a spring-tide beauty; it was the beauty of young frisking things, round-limbed, gambolling, circumventing you by a false air of innocence—the innocence of a young star-browed calf, for example, that, being inclined for a promenade out of bounds, leads you a severe steeplechase over hedge and ditch, and only comes to a stand in the middle of a bog.

"And they are the prettiest attitudes and movements into which a pretty girl is thrown in making up butter—tossing movements that give a charming curve to the arm, and a sideward inclination of the round white neck; little patting and rolling movements with the palm of the hand, and nice adaptations and finishings which cannot at all be effected without a great play of the pouting mouth and the dark eyes. And then the butter itself seems to communicate a fresh charm—it is so pure, so sweet-scented; it is turned off the mould with such a beautiful firm surface, like marble in a pale yellow light! Moreover, Hetty was particularly clever at making up the butter; it was the one performance of hers that her aunt allowed to pass without severe criticism; so she handled it with all the grace that belongs to mastery."

And now shall I turn to the end of the second volume and read you the account of Hetty Sorel in Stoniton jail, under sentence of death for child-murder? No; I will spare you, and myself, that. Let me rather ask you to note how through the hundreds of pages which divide the two episodes, the thought of retribution constantly occurs. You remember how poor Arthur Donnithorne, in a feeble irresolute way, so true to life, dallies with the temptation. His friend the Rector, Irwine—what an admirably drawn character!—gives him a kind caution: "Don't feed her vanity and fill her little noddle with the notion that she is a great beauty, attractive to fine gentlemen, or you will spoil her for a poor man's wife." Arthur does not think it possible for him to do anything mean, dastardly, or cruel. "I am a devil of a fellow for getting myself into a hobble," he meditates; "but I always take care that the load shall fall on my own shoulders." "Unhappily," adds George Eliot, like the Chorus in a Greek play, "hobbles sometimes obstinately refuse to inflict their worst consequences on the prime offender, in spite of his loudly expressed wish." Arthur Donnithorne meets Hetty, and then—well, what can he do to secure himself from any more of this folly? He will take his old friend and tutor into his confidence. He will tell Irwine. "The mere act of telling will make the matter seem trivial; the temptation will vanish, as the charm of fond words vanishes when we repeat them to the indifferent." He tries to tell Irwine, but, willing to justify himself—another masterly touch—he prefaces his intended confession with the question: "You don't think one who struggles against a temptation into which he falls at last, as bad as the man who never struggles at all?" And the Rector answers, "No, certainly: I pity him in proportion to his struggles, for they foreshadow that inward suffering, which is the worst form of Nemesis.

Consequences are unpitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences quite apart from any fluctuations that went before: consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. And it is best to confine our minds to this certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us." But brought thus suddenly to the brink of confession, Arthur starts back. And so the story goes on. You all know it. I need not follow it. But do you remember how sorry Arthur is for himself? "Good God," he reflects, "what a miserable fool he was to be brought into such a dilemma. And yet if ever a man had excuses he had." "Pity," observes the author, in her character of Chorus, "that consequences are determined, not by excuses, but by actions." And then when he comes home, on his grandfather's death, to take possession of the property, without any evil feeling towards any human being, happy, and wishing to make every one happy that comes within his reach, he finds awaiting him Irwine's letter, telling him that Hetty is in prison awaiting her trial on a charge of child-murder. "I will not attempt," the Rector writes, "to add by one word of reproval to the retribution that is now falling on you." Retribution! Yes; at last he grasps the idea. The lifelong consciousness of a deed which he now sees in its true character, a deed such as he had thought himself incapable of, mean, dastardly, and cruel—aye, and irreparable!

"There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for," are the last words which we hear from the lips of Arthur Donnithorne—words that had been spoken to him months before by Adam Bede, and which had burned themselves into his memory, ineffaceable for ever.

The same tragic truth underlies George Eliot's last novel, or rather one of two stories which we find in strange juxtaposition in *Daniel Deronda*, and by far the more interesting of the two; the story of Gwendolen Harleth. I call Grandcourt one of the strongest characters ever drawn by George Eliot, or indeed by any one: one of the most strange and terrible creations to be found in romantic fiction. And yet how true to life! We see the man with his pale face, his calm and disdainful expression, his love of tyranny, his disbelief in goodness, his indomitable self-possession, his iron will. I remember a distinguished French man of letters once remarking to me, "In Grandcourt we have the type of man sometimes formed by the athletic and brutal education now in vogue in your public schools. The spirit of combativeness which it develops is useful against material obstacles. But in idle and dissipated lives it issues in such men as Grandcourt." I am far from wholly accepting this criticism. But perhaps there may be an element of truth in it worth pondering. This by the way. Poor Gwendolen—how can we help pitying her in spite of her worldliness, her hardness, her egoism?—sells her "imperial moulded form" to this man, in order to avoid the poverty staring her in the face; accepts him as her husband with no affection for him, with a pretty clear apprehension of what he is, and in spite of her promise not to marry him given to a woman whose story she knew—Lydia Glaisher. You remember that Grandcourt had entrusted his mother's diamonds to Mrs. Glaisher, at one time, when he thought of marrying her. On Gwendolen's wedding-day they are brought to her, a bride of a few hours, in her boudoir, in her new home, and with them this letter.

> "These diamonds, which were once given with ardent love to Lydia Glaisher, she passes on to you. You have broken your word to her, that you might possess what was hers. Perhaps you think of being happy, as she once was, and of having beautiful children such as hers, who will thrust hers aside. God is too just for that. The man you have married has a withered heart. His best young love was mine; you could not take that from me when you took the rest. It is dead; but I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried as well as mine. You had your warning. You have chosen to injure me and my children. He had meant to marry me. He would have married me at last, if you had not broken your word. You will have your punishment. I desire it with all my soul.

"Will you give him this letter to set him against me and ruin us more—me and my children? Shall you like to stand before your husband with these diamonds on you, and these words of mine in his thoughts and yours? Will he think you have any right to complain when he has made you miserable? You took him with your eyes open. The willing wrong you have done me will be your curse."

Gwendolen's eyes were spellbound in reading the horrible words of the letter, over and over again, a doom of penance. From that day "they nestled their venomous life within her." What was her existence as it dragged on, hour after hour, in abject endurance of Grandcourt's dull tyranny, but "submission to a yoke drawn on her by an action she was ashamed of;" "the humiliating doom of terrified silence lest her husband should discover with what sort of consciousness she had married him." How she longs for a deliverance! "I knew no way of killing him: but I did kill him in my thoughts," she confesses afterwards. You know the final catastrophe. They are sailing, Gwendolen and her husband, off Genoa in a boat by themselves. Ah, but let her tell it.

"I remember then letting go the tiller and saying 'God help me!' But then I was forced to take it again and go on; and the evil longings, the evil prayers came again and blotted everything else dim, till, in the midst of them—I don't know how it was—he was turning the sail—there was a gust—he was struck—I know nothing—I only know that I saw my wish outside me. I saw him sink, and my heart gave a leap as if it were going out of me. I think I did not move. I kept my hands tight. It was long enough for me to be glad, and yet to think it was no use—he would come up again. And he *was* come—farther off—the boat had moved. It was all like lightning. 'The rope!' he called out in a voice—not his own—I hear it now—and I stooped for the rope—I felt I must—I felt sure he could swim, and he would come back whether or not, and I dreaded him. That was in my mind—he would come back. But he was gone down again, and I had the rope in my hand—no, there he was again—his face above the water—and he cried again—and I held my hand, and my heart said, 'Die!'—and he sank; and I felt 'It is done—I am wicked, I am lost!'—and I had the rope in my hand—I don't know what I thought—I was leaping away from myself—I would have saved him then. I was leaping away from my crime, and there it was—close to me as I fell—there was the dead face—dead, dead. It can never be altered."

"It can never be altered." No—

> "Deeds are the pulse of Time, his beating life:
> And righteous or unrighteous, being done,
> Must throb in after throb, till Time himself
> Be laid in stillness, and the universe
> Quiver and breathe upon no mirror more."

One of the most widely read scholars, and most competent critics that the world just now possesses, Lord Acton, has remarked, "There are few works in literature whose influence is so ennobling as George Eliot's." I entirely agree. She is the great tragic poet of our age. She was to her day and generation, what Euripides was to his. I do not know who has more luminously summed up her work, than that acute and accomplished critic, Edmond Scherer, in words with which I shall end this Lecture.

"She paints, it is true, only ordinary life: her favourite heroes are children, artisans, labourers; her favourite subjects, middle-class absurdities, the prejudices of the little town, the superstitions of the country. But, under these externals of prosaic existence, she makes us assist at the eternal tragedy of the human heart; the failures of the will, the calculations of egotism, pride, coquetry, hatred, love, all our passions, and all our weaknesses, all our littlenesses, all our deviations—all are set down in her pages. Nor is this all. A sort of perfume of wisdom emanates from her creations; a sort of teaching of experience flows from them. George Eliot contemplates the faults of men with so much sympathy, mingled with such elevation of thought, the condemnation she passes on evil is so tempered by help and comprehension, the smile on her face is so near tears, she is so clear-sighted and so resigned, she knows so much about our miseries, she has herself suffered and lived so much, that we cannot read her pages without feeling ourselves won to that lofty toleration of hers. We are moved and we are tranquillized; she seems to have enlarged our ideas of the world and of God. And when we close the book, we find ourselves more at peace with ourselves, more calm face to face with the problems of Destiny."

# LECTURE IV.

# THE HUMOURIST AS PROPHET.

## *CARLYLE.*

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### *CARLYLE.*

SOME time ago a series of articles appeared in one of the magazines—I think it was an American magazine—entitled, *Books That Have Helped Me.* Various men of letters recorded therein their obligations to one or another writer, whom they had found of special assistance in forming their intellectual or spiritual character. Now, for myself, there is no thinker, no teacher, to whom I am more deeply indebted than Thomas Carlyle. I remember how when I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, his books came to me as a great awakening, leading me to look for myself, as best I could, at the problems of human life and human destiny. I remember, moreover, that I read many of them at a season of sickness, and how particularly valuable they were to me then. "My son," said the dying Herder, when heart and flesh failed him, as his malady increased, and his strength decayed, "my son, repeat to me some great thought; nothing else will refresh me."

Well, I, in my weakness and weariness, derived something of that refreshment from the writings of Carlyle. Nor has time dimmed my devotion for him, although on many important matters I am far from thinking as he did. You remember John Sterling's testimony in a letter written to him in the consciousness of swiftly approaching death. "Towards me it is still more true than towards England, that no man has been and done like you." The feeling which these words express, is my own feeling.

Such affection and reverence for this great sage and teacher were, I suppose, very widespread during the last twenty or thirty years of his life. And "the explosion of the doggeries," as he might himself have said, which took place shortly after his death, was no doubt as painful to many others as it was to me. It was the opportunity of the gigmen, and they made the most of it. The "twenty seven millions of people, mostly fools," had their revenge. Now that the howling has died away, I may be permitted to say a very few words regarding the occasion of it. A number of documents which Carlyle had left, were published by the man of letters to whom they had been entrusted. Many of them, beyond all question, were never intended by Carlyle for publication. And these were eagerly seized upon as discreditable to him. They exhibited acrid, and, in some cases, untenable judgments passed by him upon certain of the most famous of his contemporaries. They exhibited him as wanting in consideration for, in tenderness to, one of the brightest and noblest women whom any man ever had the privilege of calling wife. Well, what can we, who love and honour Carlyle, say in extenuation of his faults? Several things, I think, may be said. In the first place the man was eminently human—he would never have done the work he did if he had not been that; acutely sensitive, hasty in temper, and quick to express his grievances, real or imaginary. Listen to the testimony of another great man about himself—

> "I'm ashamed of myself, of my tears and my tongue:
> So easily fretted, so often unstrung;
> Mad at trifles to which a chance moment gives birth,
> Complaining of heaven and complaining of earth."

Do you know who wrote those verses? I will tell you. The man who wrote those verses honoured me with his friendship for many years, and I discerned in him one of the best and holiest men that ever lived. Those self-accusatory verses were written by Cardinal Newman. And they are true. He would never have written them if they had not been. They paint truly one side of his character of which he was intensely conscious; of which his friends were conscious, but not so intensely. Well, the feeling which they express must often have been Carlyle's. Yes, and Mrs. Carlyle's too. Is there any of us who could endure the test of the lurid glare of publicity cast upon our most private thoughts, our most unguarded and undisciplined utterances? I am sure I could not. I do not believe any one could. Should we like such thoughts and utterances to be published to the world? Would it be fair to us? Would it give a really true impression of us? Consider the magnifying effect of print. A word harmless or almost harmless in conversation, or even in a letter, or a diary, often acquires a sinister significance in the fierce light which beats upon a book. I protest against the cynicism to which nothing is sacred. Those great principles of reticence, reverence, reserve, which as I said in a former Lecture, have their endless applications in civilized life, assuredly come in here. I know of no worse sign of the times than the prurient curiosity just now so rife about the petty details —if scandalous so much the better—of the lives of eminent persons. I know of no more ignominious occupation than theirs who minister to it.

"For now the poet cannot die
 Nor leave his music as of old,
 But round him, ere he scarce be cold,
Begins the scandal and the cry.

Proclaim the faults he would not show,
 Break lock and key: betray the trust,
 Keep nothing sacred; 'tis but just
The many-headed beast should know."

Ah the shame of it!

Carlyle, then, was intensely human. And for that reason faults and foibles incident to humanity came out in him more strongly than they are wont to come out in more animal men. Again, he was a man of genius; and it is an old saying and a true, "Nullum magnum ingenium sine melancolia." Melancholy—Johnson defines it as "a gloomy, pensive, and discontented temper" —is ever, more or less, the portion of genius. You know Goethe's saying that the more the light, the darker the shadow: "Wo viel Licht ist, ist starker Schatten." "One pays dear for any intellect one may have," Carlyle wrote in his *Journal.* "It means primarily, sensibility, which again means injury, pain, misery from unconscious nature or conscious or unconscious man; in fact, a heavy burden, painful to bear, however piously you take it." Then, again, remember Carlyle's origin and early training. Still sadness—it is not necessarily unhappiness—is impressed upon the peasant life of Scotland. Wherever Puritanism has prevailed, "glory and loveliness have passed away" from common existence. "Out of the day a joy hath taken flight." So much is unquestionable truth. I am well aware it is not the whole truth. If grace and gladness have drooped under a Puritanical regimen, the more severe and Stoical virtues have flourished. This by the way. But Carlyle's irritability and acidity are also traceable immediately to a physical cause. As we all know, he was a lifelong martyr to dyspepsia. Perhaps this was an incident of his prophetic calling. It is difficult to think of a prophet—unless it be, perhaps, Balaam the son of Beor—as eupeptic. How is it possible for "one who feels the immeasurable world," one who lives—the expression is Carlyle's—"in a continual element of black broken by lightnings," one who is ever haunted by startling or lugubrious visions, one whose scroll is written within and without with lamentations and mourning and woe, to keep a good digestion? The Hebrew prophets—Moses and Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, Jeremiah and Jonah, for example—must have been as "gey ill to deal wi'" as Carlyle himself. Assuredly we may say the same of the Hellenic prophets, if Teiresias, as we find him in the Greek tragedies, is a true type of them. One must expect a prophet to be somewhat arbitrary, choleric, uncomfortable, and unfair, as Carlyle often was. But every one who knew him well—that was not my privilege—found him the most generous, the most tender hearted, the kindliest of men. Thrifty in his personal habits, even in his extreme age, "his one expensive luxury," as Mr. Froude has finely observed, "was charity." "Carlyle, best of all men, kept the manly attitude in his time," said Emerson. It appears to me that the saying is well warranted.

So much of the man. We are concerned with him to-day in the character of The Humourist as Prophet. Unlike the other three humourists, who have been the subjects of the preceding Lectures, he did not work in the domain of romantic fiction. He viewed, indeed, the art of the novelist with some disdain—quite wrongly, I think—abandoning to him "children, minors, and semi-fatuous persons." And yet, I may observe, in passing, his translation of Goethe's novel, *Wilhelm Meister*, was one of his most cherished productions. However, he found the novel too frivolous in form for the word which he had to speak. The historical narrative, the essay, the fantastic medley, were better suited to his mission. I can hardly, indeed, reckon him a great historian in spite of his *French Revolution*, his *Cromwell*, his *Frederick*. His *French Revolution* is not history in the proper sense of the word. It is a set of lurid pictures illustrative of that great event, by an artist of singular power, pictures which bring out its real significance in a quite unique manner. His *Cromwell* is essentially the portrait of a soul: a very skilfully constructed autobiography with connecting narrative and reflections, exhibiting its subject with a vividness never surpassed, so far as I know, in that species of composition. His *Frederick* appeals to us chiefly as a comedy of humours, and I, for my part, always regret that its author lavished so much time over military details, now of little interest save to professional warriors. In Carlyle the historian is quite subordinate to the humourist.

For assuredly a humourist he is, in the fullest sense of the word, as we defined it in the First Lecture; an artist who playfully gives us his intuition of the world and of human life. His playfulness is usually of the grimmest—the playfulness of the lion or of the bear. And it is his distinctive note. A very competent critic observes, "It will not be pretended that Carlyle has written anything so fine as *Gulliver;* and he would have been the first to own that there is a delicate sparkling mischievousness in Sterne which he cannot come near. But for broad Hogarthian humour he has no equal. And his single strokes are miraculous. There is nothing he depicts but he sees it before him. To the reader he makes things solid as well as visible. . . . Such a master of word-painting there never was in English literature." "The style is the man," says Buffon, and it is a most profound saying. Nothing is more idle than to set up what I may call an abstract standard of literary perfection, in entire independence of the writer's character and aims. Taine, if my memory is not at fault, replying to a critic who objected that Balzac did not know French, said, "Balzac knew French as well as any one, but he employed it in his own way." The saying would apply to Carlyle. Carlyle's style is Carlylese. It would be the most affected of affectations for any one else to write in it. To him it was perfectly natural—as natural as the Miltonic style was to Milton. And that is its sufficient vindication. It was the only style in which he could deliver his prophetic message.

For as a prophet I assuredly hold him. When I say, "a prophet," I do not, of course, mean a propounder of caliginous conundrums for future generations to solve. I mean a man who, by virtue of the insight, the inspiration that is in him, sees through phenomena into reality: who rightly reads and interprets the signs of his times, and discerns beneath them—

> "The baby figure of the giant mass
> Of things to come at large."

This is admirably expressed in some words of Carlyle's: "A Messenger sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us, . . . direct from the Inner Fact of things—he lives, and has to live, in daily communication with that. Hearsays cannot hide it from him. He is blind, homeless, miserable, following hearsays. It glares upon him." "The *Vates,*" he elsewhere tells us, "has penetrated into the sacred mystery of the universe: the open secret, as Goethe calls it, which few discover. He has apprehended the Divine Idea of the world which lies at the bottom of appearances. So Fichte speaks." And thus we may describe him in the Hebrew phrase, as the man whose eyes are opened. Carlyle proceeds by intuition and affirmation, the true prophetic method. He exhorts, entreats, threatens, denounces, condemns; he seldom reasons. "The most clairvoyant intellect of our age," Taine calls him: I think, with justice. No one else has so clearly discerned the signs of the times, or so truly read the lessons which they convey.

We know the spiritual history of the man. He has himself written it for us, especially in his *Sartor Resartus* and his *Reminiscences.* We know how, brought up by pious parents in the straitest sect of Calvinism, he was led in early manhood to reject its bankrupt bibliolatry and its superannuated superstitions. We know how for seven years he abode in the wilderness of doubt and denial, weighed down by "the burden and the mystery of all this unintelligible world." You remember the passage in *Faust*, where Mephistopheles, "der Geist der stets verneint," preaches the doctrine of the Everlasting No: it were better that all should perish, that night and chaos should resume their ancient sway. "Thus did the bewildered wanderer stand, as so many have done, shouting question after question into the Sibyl cave of Destiny, and receiving no answer but an echo. It was all a grim desert, this once fair world of his; wherein was heard the howling of wild beasts, or the shriek of despairing hate-filled men; and no pillar of Cloud by day, and no pillar of Fire by night, any more guarded the Pilgrim. . . . The Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge immeasurable steam engine, rolling on in its dead indifference to grind him limb from limb. O the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha and Mill of Death!" This "Everlasting No" has been sung by a poet of our day in verse of terrible beauty—

> "To thank with brief thanksgiving
> Whatever gods may be,
> That no life lives for ever,
> That dead men rise up never,
> That e'en the weariest river
> Winds somewhere safe to sea."

Atheism this is, of the blackest kind, unrelieved by a single ray propitious. How Carlyle passed out of this Valley of the Shadow of Death into the sunshine of the "Everlasting Yea," he has told us, in mystic utterance.

"What is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? O Heavens, is it, in very deed, He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me? Fore-shadows, call them rather fore-splendours, of that Truth, and Beginning of Truths, fell mysteriously over my soul. Sweeter than Dayspring to the shipwrecked in Nova Zembla; ah, like the mother's voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's! With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellow-man: with an infinite Love, and infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave.

* * * * *

"Well did the Wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (Entsagen) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.' I asked myself: What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word, is it not because thou art not Happy? Because the Thou (sweet gentleman) is not sufficiently honoured, nourished, soft-bedded, and lovingly cared-for? Foolish soul! what Act of Legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy! Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to eat; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe. 'Es leuchtet mir ein.' 'I see a glimpse of it!' cries he elsewhere: 'there is in man a Higher than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness!' Was it not to preach forth this same Higher, that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only has he Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired Doctrine art thou also honoured to be taught; O Heavens! and broken with manifold merciful Afflictions, even till thou become contrite, and learn it! O, thank thy Destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain: thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

"Es leuchtet mir ein!" The light breaks upon me. And in that divine radiance the universe was transfigured. I observe, in passing, that some foolish persons, on the strength of such expressions as that which I have just read, "Ah, Nature, why do I not name thee God?" have labelled Carlyle a Pantheist. If by Pantheism is meant—and that is the proper meaning of the word—"that speculative system which by absolutely identifying the subject and the object of thought, reduces all existence, mental and material, to phenomenal modifications of one eternal self-existing Substance," Carlyle was assuredly no Pantheist. Such a doctrine as that would have seemed to him the most stupid of blasphemies. He was as far as any man could be from holding that all is God. He did assuredly hold that all is in God; the doctrine taught by Plato to the men of Athens, *πάντα πλήρη θεῶν, πλήρη ψυχῆς,* and recalled to them by St. Paul, "In Him we live and move and have our being:" a doctrine which Krause has not inappropriately called Panentheism. And this belief transfigured for him the whole universe.

"For Matter, were it never so despicable, is Spirit, the manifestation of Spirit: were it never so honourable, can it be more? The thing visible, nay the thing imagined, the thing in any way conceived as visible, what is it but a garment, a clothing of the higher, celestial, invisible, unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright? All visible things are emblems; what thou seest is not there on its own account, strictly taken, is not there at all: Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea and *body* it forth."

Again, consider another passage in which he adopts—or perhaps I should say adapts—Kant's well-known doctrine as to space and time.

"Deepest of all illusory Appearances, for hiding Wonder, as for many other ends, are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, Space and Time. These are spun and woven for us from before Birth itself, to clothe our celestial Me for dwelling here, and yet to blind it,—lie all-embracing, as the universal canvas, or warp and woof, whereby all minor Illusions, in this Phantasm Existence, weave and paint themselves."

I must leave you to follow out this matter further, if you think well, for your own selves. Here, I observe, that Carlyle, writing years after, testified, "I then felt and still feel endlessly indebted to Goethe in this business." What those obligations precisely were he has never told us. And this remark is generally accounted among his dark sayings. Certainly Goethe's whole ethos—his cast of thought—differs much from Carlyle's. That must be plain to every one who reads the two, even with moderate attention. Perhaps what most helped Carlyle in this great spiritual crisis is the Hellenic largeness of life that breathes through Goethe: the "ampler ether, the diviner air," in which, well-nigh asphyxiated as he was by the fogs and miasma of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he breathed freely like man new made. "No one can read me," said Goethe, "without gaining a certain interior liberty." But more than this. Who can deny that a great deal of what passes current as Christianity, in every form of it, is but thinly disguised Materialism? The great central truth taught by Christ and His

Apostles of dying to the world, to the life of the senses, of rising to an ideal, a divine life, lies buried under a mass of shibboleths and sophisms and superstitions. Now I do not know any one who has more emphatically proclaimed this truth than Goethe. "Die and live again," he exhorts us, "for until thou hast done that thou art but a troubled guest on this dark earth."

> "Stirb und werde;
> Denn so lang du das nicht hast,
> Bist du nur ein trüber Gast
> Auf der dunkeln Erde."

How much more to the same effect there is in Goethe I need not say. May not this well have come home to Carlyle in his anxious, heartstricken search after light, with an even deeper meaning than Goethe was conscious of? "Poets," says Plato, "utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand." However that may be, certain it is that from this time forth Carlyle felt he had a message to his day and generation. And he began to preach and to teach with an intense conviction, that led Goethe at once to recognize in him "a new moral force, the extent and effect of which it was impossible to predict." One thinks of the similar crisis in the life of the great Arabian prophet, concerning whom Carlyle has written so appreciatively, when the Voice came to him upon Mount Hîra, bidding him "Cry in the name of the Lord." The two men had much in common.

But I must not pause to work out that parallel. Let us go on to inquire, more closely what was the faith that lived in Thomas Carlyle, which breathed through all his teaching—there is a singular spiritual unity in his work—and which made it such a wonderful power. Mr. Froude has epigrammatically described that teaching as "Calvinism without the theology." It is not an accurate description. Accuracy was not among Mr. Froude's many high gifts. Carlyle rejected much of Calvinistic theology. He retained two of its essential verities—so he regarded them, and, as I think, with amplest warrant. He tried to get down to the primal, the elemental facts of Religion and of Life that underlay Calvinistic theology. He found two which he deemed self-evident, borne in upon him with irresistible power; truths which he could no more doubt than his own existence. The first is—there was no getting beyond this, as he judged—that the Infinite reveals itself to the living spirit. You remember the verses of Tennyson—

> "Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet:
> Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

That expresses Carlyle's deepest conviction. It is merely an expansion of St. Augustine's profound dictum—never was so high a truth compressed into two words—"Internum, Æternum." "He who traces nothing of God in his own soul," Carlyle wrote, "will never find God in the world of matter: mere circlings of force there, of universal death, of merciless indifference, nothing but a dead steam engine there." And it was this revelation in the microcosm that explained for him the macrocosm—

> "The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
> Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?"

The poet, you see, turns to his own soul for the answer to the question. So did Carlyle. Reason everywhere was the reply, in the external universe as well as the internal. "I should go distracted," he said to Tyndall—and we cannot doubt that the words were literally true—"if I were not sure that intellect is at the heart of things." This is what he called the "Divine Idea in the universe," borrowing a phrase from Fichte, by whose philosophy he was greatly influenced at one time. Carlyle felt that to make unreason the last word of the universe is the suicide of reason; which is pretty much what Kant meant — he was speaking indeed from another point of view—when he said that if law could perish, the whole worth of life would perish with it. Divine Reason at the heart of things, a Supreme Moral Governor of man and of the universe—that was for Carlyle the first of certitudes. "A world," he says, "in which if we did not know of very truth that God presided over it, and did incessantly guide it towards good and not towards evil, we were uncontrollably wretched."

Such was Carlyle's Theism—clear to him as the sun at noonday, and the very sun of his soul; a self-evident fact standing in no need of "evidences," for which he felt the intensest scorn, and permeating his whole being. Equally clear to him, as a fact in the world of consciousness, was what Kant has called "the categorical imperative of duty," the eternal distinction between Right and Wrong, and the unqualified obligation to follow Right laid upon us by the law within, written on the fleshly tables of the heart. His conception of the moral law, like Kant's, was in the strictest sense transcendental. It appeared to him that when Reason pronounces "This is so and must be so," we transcend the limits of time and space, and are let into eternity. Kant puts it tersely, "The command, 'Thou shalt not lie,' is not valid for men alone: it is valid for all rational beings as well as men: for the basis of the obligation is not in the nature of men but *à priori* in the pure conception of the Reason." And this, Kant adds, holds of all moral laws which are properly such. Now, it is upon these universal and necessary ideals of truth and right, and upon these only, as Carlyle intensely believed, that the whole fabric of ordered human life, both public and private, rests. They are the everlasting rock on which alone it can be rightly reared; a rock on which the storms of passion and of circumstance will beat in vain; and other foundation can no man lay. I take it Carlyle would have adopted the words of Fichte, "Most certain it is, and, indeed, the ground of all other certainty, that the moral order of the world exists: that for every intelligent being there is an appointed work which he is expected to perform; and that every circumstance of his life is part of a plan." Individual existence appeared to Carlyle a time of moral probation. And he thought the same of national existence. He fully agreed with Schiller that the history of the world is the judgment of the world. "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht." And here is the explanation of his often misunderstood doctrine of might and right. "No man," he once testified of himself, "was ever more contemptuous of might, except when it rests on right." "Suppose I did say that might is right," he observed to an American gentleman, "I know what I meant by it: not what you think I meant. There is a true meaning in it. A man is an atheist who believes that in the long run, what God allows to triumph is not right."

Such, in the barest outlines, were the essential, the fundamental, the vital beliefs of Thomas

Carlyle. I say "vital," for to him they were not mere speculations, but living and life-giving facts; the very essential condition of all true and worthy existence, individual or collective. Is it objected that there is nothing new in them? I answer, I know that: St. Thomas Aquinas taught them, with much clearness and precision, six centuries ago. Carlyle was no setter forth of strange gods. There are no such things as new truths in religion or ethics. The essential verities of religion and ethics, as Antigone tells us—

> "are not of to-day or yesterday,
> But ever live, and no one knows their birth-tide."

Like Him, in whom they are fully realized, they are from everlasting to everlasting, nor is there in them any variableness or shadow of turning. The formulas in which we clothe them change; the light in which they present themselves varies: but they are the same, and their years shall not fail.

These are the fundamental truths, then, which Carlyle preached for more than four decades to mankind with an almost savage earnestness—"here," as he expresses it, "in this fog Babylon, amid the mud and smoke, in the infinite din of vociferous platitude and quack out-bellowing quack." It appeared to him that these truths had largely lost their hold on men's hearts and li[illegible]ut You remember his definition of religion in o[illegible]lest his *Lectures on Heroes.* [illegible]ther.

"A man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. A man's or a nation of men's. By religion I do not mean here the church creed which he professes, the articles of faith which he will sign, and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly, in many cases not this at all. We see men of all kinds of professed creeds attain to almost all degrees of worth or worthlessness under each or any of them. This is not what I call religion, this profession and assertion; which is often only a profession and assertion from the outworks of the man, from the mere argumentative region of him, if even so deep as that. But the thing a man does practically believe (and this is often enough *without* asserting it even to himself, much less to others); the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations with this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his *religion;* or, it may be, his mere scepticism and *no-religion:* the manner it is in which he feels himself to be spiritually related to the Unseen World or No-world; and I say, if you tell me what that is, you tell me to a very great extent what the man is, what the kind of things he will do is."

Judging England by this test, Carlyle found that hief God is Mammon—" Gain, the master idol Su s realm," Wordsworth had said before him: tial, t r real heaven is success, our real hell not making money. He knew well that practical Atheism is compatible with a profession of Christianity not consciously false. He saw, too, —who could help seeing—that anything more utterly discrepant from the idea of the *New Testament* than the ethos of modern society is not easily conceivable. He found even the belief in the eternal distinction between right and wrong largely set aside by a philosophy, much in credit, which teaches that virtue and vice, justice and injustice, good and evil, are mere matters of cunning calculation. That philosophy seemed to him the appropriate philosophy of an age of practical Atheism.

"It seems to me all deniers of Godhood, and all lip-believers of it, are bound to be Benthamites, if they have courage and honesty. I call this gross steam-engine Utilitarianism an approach towards new faith. It was a laying-down of cant; a saying to oneself, 'Well then, this world *is* a dead iron machine, the god of it Gravitation and selfish hunger; let us see what, by checking and balancing, and good adjustment of tooth and pinion, can be made of it!' Benthamism has something complete, manful, in such fearless committal of itself to what it finds true; you may call it heroic, though a heroism with its eyes put out! . . . I would wish all men to know and lay to heart, that he who discerns nothing but mechanism in the universe has in the fatalest way missed the secret of the universe altogether.

That all Godhood should vanish out of men's conception of the universe seems to me precisely the most brutal error—I will not disparage heathenism by calling it a heathen error,—that men could fall into. It is not true; it is false at the very heart of it. A man who thinks so will think *wrong* about all things in the world; this original sin will vitiate all other conclusions he can form."

And it did, in very truth, seem to him that men in general do now think wrong about all things in the world. Our social, our political arrangements, appeared to him, unveracious, unjust, and doomed. He read "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," plainly written on them. That, as he considered, was the meaning of the popular movement throughout Europe, little as its leaders knew; that the monition which it addressed to the governing classes. You remember the inimitable way in which he uses the story of Balaam to impress this view: Balaam, whom he elsewhere calls, "the father of such as wear shovel hats."

"The case alluded to stands recorded in the *Book of Numbers:* the case of Balaam the son of Beor. Truly if we consider it, there are few passages more notable and pregnant in their way, than this of Balaam. The Midianitish Soothsayer (Truth-speaker, or as we should say now, Counsel-giver and Senator) is journeying forth, as he has from of old quite prosperously done, in the way of his vocation; not so much to 'curse the people of the Lord,' as to earn for himself a comfortable penny by such means as are possible and expedient; something it is hoped, midway between cursing and blessing; which shall not, except in case of necessity, be either a curse or a blessing, or indeed be anything so much as a Nothing that will look like a Something and bring wages in. For the man is not dishonest; far from it; still less is he honest; but above all things, he is, has been and will be, respectable. Did calumny ever dare to fasten itself on the fair fame of Balaam? In his whole walk and conversation, has he not shown consistency enough; ever doing and speaking the thing that was decent; with proper spirit maintaining his status; so that friend and opponent must often compliment him, and defy the spiteful world to say, *Herein* art thou a Knave? And now as he jogs along, in official comfort, with brave official retinue, his heart filled with good things, his head with schemes for the Suppression of Vice, and the Cause of civil and religious Liberty all over the world:—consider what a spasm and life-clutching ice-taloned pang, must have shot through the brain and pericardium of Balaam, when his Ass not only on the sudden stood stock-still, defying spur and cudgel, but—*began to talk,* and that in a reasonable manner! Did not his face, elongating, collapse, and tremour occupy his joints? For the thin crust of Respectability has cracked asunder; and a bottomless preternatural Inane yawns under him instead. Farewell, a long farewell to all his greatness: the spirit-stirring Vote, ear-piercing Hear;

the big Speech that makes ambition virtue; soft Palm-greasing first of raptures, and Cheers that emulate sphere music; Balaam's occupation's gone."

This of Balaam was written in 1832. It occurs in an article entitled *Corn Law Rhymes*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*. And it is to me of special interest as being, I think, the first clear indication of Carlyle's *Weltanschauung*, of his outlook on the condition of the world around him. I do not forget his two earlier essays—both masterpieces—*Signs of the Times*, and *Characteristics*, and the pregnant hints they give of the workings of his mind regarding political and social problems. But in this article, *Corn Law Rhymes*, he strikes, so to speak, the key-note of his prophetic message concerning the condition of England, to an age "when public and private Principle, as the word was once understood, having gone out of sight, and Self-interest being left to plot, and struggle, and scramble, as it could and would, difficulties had accumulated till they were no longer to be borne, and the spirit that should have fronted and conquered them seemed to have forsaken the world; when the Rich, as the utmost they could resolve on, had ceased to govern: and the Poor, in their fast-accumulating numbers, and ever-widening complexities, had ceased to be able to do without governing, and now the plan of 'Competition' and '*Laissez-faire*' was, on every side, approaching its consummation; and each, bound up in the circle of his own wants and perils, stood dimly distrustful of his neighbour, and the distracted Common-weal was a Common-woe."

Here we have, in outline, that burden of England (to use the Hebraic phrase) which Carlyle was to utter. Transcendentalist as he essentially was, he was no mere preacher of theoretic beliefs, of abstract dogmas, of rewards and punishments beyond the grave. He was a witness to men of what they ought to believe and to do; reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come: to come in this life, for he assuredly believed, with the Hebrew seer, "Verily there is a God that judgeth the earth." He dwelt little on the ultimate solution in another life, of the problems of human existence and destiny. "I will not ask or guess," he wrote in his *Journal* in 1854, "I will not ask or guess (*know*, no man ever could or can) what He has appointed for His poor creatures of the earth: a right and good and wise appointment it full surely is. Let me look to it with pious manfulness, without either hope or fear that were excessive." His concern was with the problems of human existence and destiny as they affect us in this world. The Great Darkness, whence we come and whither we go, was ever present to him. But it was present as a monition to work while we have the light. "Man is here in the centre of immensities, in the conflux of eternities, with but one life to lead, not in frivolity or self-indulgence, but in noble self-denial." Like the old Jewish seers, who were his spiritual ancestors, his it was to read the signs of the times and to interpret them to the multitude, without eyes to see, without heart to understand: to set forth those verities by adhering to which England had attained all her greatness in the past, and in renewed loyalty to which, alone, was her hope for the future. And necessity was laid upon him, as upon those Jewish seers. He spoke not of himself. "I felt a kind of call and monition to do it," he said of his book on *Chartism*—given to the world in 1839—the most stirring appeal to the national conscience which had been made since the days of Burke. "The thing," he said, "has been in my head and heart these ten, some of it, these twenty years: one is right glad to be delivered of such a thing on any terms." He predicted that it would be "equally astonishing to Girondists, Radicals, do-nothing Aristocrats, Conservatives, and dilettante unbelieving Whigs"—Whigs of whom his Balaam was meant to be the type. He was right. Such plain speaking about the poor, their rights, and their wrongs, puzzled politicians. Men asked of it, as they asked in later years of another famous book, "What man will it serve, what party?" To the rank and file of Benthamite Radicals, it was especially unwelcome, although the greatest of them, John Stuart Mill, was delighted with it. "What has Parliamentary Radicalism obtained for the people? What other than shadows of things has it so much as asked for them?" he inquired. But those Parliamentary Radicals believed that since the Reform Act of 1832, England had been making rapid progress; that her prosperity had been increasing by leaps and bounds. To Carlyle the progress appeared like that of the Gadarene swine, swift certainly, but tending to the steep place and the engulfing sea; the prosperity dazzling, indeed, but a phosphorescence of Mammonism: not a celestial, but an infernal radiance. Indeed, the question which this *brochure* propounded, "Is the condition of the English working people wrong: so wrong that rational men cannot, will not, and even should not rest quiet under it?" was resented as both new and inconvenient. Honourable members, within those walls at Westminster, were occupied with quite other matters. "You read Hansard Debates, or the morning papers, if you have nothing to do! The old grave question whether A. is to be in office or B., with the subsidiary questions growing out of that—all manner of questions and subjects, except simply the Alpha and Omega of all."

Well, by this book on *Chartism*, Carlyle had, for the time, liberated his soul. But two years later, the voice within said to him once more, "Cry." He was trying to gird himself up to the writing of *Cromwell*. But—so he wrote to Sterling—his heart was "sick to look at the things now going on in this England." He felt, as he expresses it, in his wild imagery, "a mass as of chaotic rubbish continents, lying on him, crushing him into silence" concerning all else: a weight of which he must rid himself before he spoke of aught else. "He felt," in Mr. Froude's words, "that he had something to say, something which he ought to say, about the present time to the present age; something of infinite importance to it. England, as he saw it, was saturated with cant, dosed to surfeit with doctrines only half true or not true at all. The progress so loudly talked of was progress downwards: and rapid and easy because it was downwards. There was not a statesman who could do honestly what he thought to be right and keep his office; not a member of Parliament who could vote by his conscience and keep his seat. *Chartism* had been a partial relief, but the very attention which it had met with was an invitation to say more, and he had an inward impulse which was forcing him on to say it." At last, in the autumn of 1842—a time of dire distress in this country—he wrote to his mother that he could not "go on with *Cromwell* or anything until he had disburdened his heart somewhat in regard to all that." He had come accidentally upon an old chronicle of Jocelyn de Brackelonde, a monk of St. Edmondsbury, presenting a vivid picture of English life in the twelfth century. That gave him the text of *Past and Present.* Of the marvellous literary merit of the book—its pathos, its humour, its creative power whereby that far-off century is made to live before us—I need not speak. Lockhart, who was then editing the *Quarterly Review*, told Carlyle that it was a book such as no other man could do, or dream of doing; that it had made him conscious of life and feeling as he had never been before. Carlyle wrote in his *Journal*, "It has been to me a considerable relief to see it fairly out of me, and I look at the disastrous condition of England with much more patience for the present, my conscience no longer reproaching me with any duty that I could do and was neglecting to do."

*Past and Present* no doubt added much to Carlyle's literary reputation. But its teaching was received, generally, with incredulity, and, largely, with indignation. It was not, however, until 1850 that he fully braved the "ardor civium prava jubentium" by his *Latter Day Pamphlets*, in which his most scathing ridicule, his fiercest denunciations of the existing public order are contained. In his *Reminiscences* he speaks of *Latter Day Pamphlet* time, and especially the time that preceded it (1848), "as very sore and heavy." "My heart," he says, "was long overloaded with the meanings at length uttered there—black electricities and consuming fires." He resolved to convey those meanings, at all hazards, although, as he judged, not more than one in a thousand would be even in a state to consider them. His thoughts swell, and surge, and overflow the ordinary formulas and phrases. Nay, his "sæva indignatio" sometimes made him unjust; as, for example, in his account, or rather caricature, of St. Ignatius Loyola. "Hard sayings for many a British reader," he knew well would be his denunciations of modern philanthropy, of parliamentary eloquence, of what is called self-government, of the school of political economists then dominant. And, in fact, to the great majority they seemed sheer insanity. His dispraise was in all the newspapers: nay, in well-nigh all the reviews and magazines. "These pamphlets, taking them altogether," a writer in *Blackwood* judged, "are about the silliest productions of the day," a sentence for which he expressed "regret," since "Mr. Carlyle may lay claim to the possession of some natural genius and ability." One thinks of the Hebrew patriarch prescient of the doom of the Cities of the Plain: "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked."

Seventeen years afterwards—it was in 1867—Carlyle lifted up his testimony for the last time in his *Shooting Niagara and After?* "Disraeli had given the word," Mr. Froude observes, "and his party had submitted to be educated. Political emancipation was to be the road for them—not practical administration and war against lies and roguery. Carlyle saw that we were in the rapids, and could not any more get out of them; but he wished to relieve his own soul, and he put together this pamphlet." His own account of it is, "It came out mostly by accident, little by volition, and is very fierce, exaggerative, ragged, unkempt, and defective. Nevertheless, I am secretly rather glad than otherwise that it is out, that the howling doggeries (dead ditto and other) should have my last word on their affairs and them, since it was to be had." That he expected as little immediate result from this "last word" as from the words which had gone before it, he told the world, plainly enough, in a few pregnant sentences, which I will read.

"It is indeed strange how prepossessions and delusions seize upon whole communities of men; no basis in the notion they have formed, yet everybody adopting it, everybody finding the whole world agree with him, and accept it as an axiom of Euclid; and in the universal repetition and reverberation taking all contradiction of it as an insult, and a sign of malicious insanity, hardly to be borne with patience. . . . All the world assenting, and continually repeating and reverberating, there soon comes that singular phenomenon which the Germans call *Schwärmerey* (enthusiasm is our poor Greek equivalent) which simply means

Swarmery, or 'the gathering of men in swarms,' and what prodigies they are in the habit of doing and believing when thrown into that miraculous condition. . . . Singular in the case of human swarms, with what perfection of unanimity and quasi-religious conviction, the stupidest absurdities can be received as axioms of Euclid, nay, as articles of faith, which you are not only to believe, unless malignantly insane, but are, if you have any honour or morality, to push into practice and without delay, see *done*, if your soul would live! Divine commandment to *vote* (Manhood Suffrage—Horsehood, Doghood ditto not yet treated of) universal 'glorious Liberty' (to sons of the Devil in overpowering majority, as would appear); count of Heads the God-appointed way in this Universe, all other ways Devil-appointed; in one brief word, which includes whatever of palpable incredibility and delirious absurdity, universally believed, can be uttered or imagined on these points, 'the equality of men,' any man equal to any other; Quashee Nigger to Socrates or Shakespeare; Judas Iscariot to Jesus Christ;—and Bedlam and Gehenna equal to the New Jerusalem, shall we say? If these things are taken up, not only as axioms of Euclid, but as articles of religion, burning to be put in practice for the salvation of the world, I think you will admit that Swarmery plays a considerable part in the heads of poor mankind; and that very considerable results are likely to follow from it, in our day."

I have read this passage because it presents, with singular vividness, a dominant thought of

Carlyle's in his accusations, denunciations, condemnations of the public and social order of our day. Veneration of, conformity with, loyalty to truth—this, as he might himself have said, was the Alpha and Omega of his spiritual and intellectual life. And this, I may note in passing, supplied the standard by which he judged public men. Hence his admiration of Wellington, "the last honest and perfectly brave man they had;" and of Sir Robert Peel, of whom Wellington testified: "I have never known him tell a deliberate falsehood:" a eulogy certainly implying a curious estimate of our politicians generally. Hence his profound contempt for a famous party leader, still living, and not to be named by me here, whom he described as "incapable of seeing veritably any fact whatever," as "most incomparable master in the art of persuading the multitude of the thing that is not." I spoke just now of the striking parallel which might be drawn between Carlyle and Mohammed. The basis of it would be the absolute devotion of each to reality, and to the Supreme Reality of whom, and for whom, and by whom are all things. You remember how the great Arabian Prophet saw his city of Mecca wholly given to idolatry, and how when he victoriously returned thither, he entered into the Kaaba, and smote down, one after another, the foul and monstrous images that defiled that sanctuary, exclaiming, "Truth has come and falsehood vanisheth: verily, falsehood is evanescent." So our Latter Day Prophet, as he looked around him, discerned that the deities whom the men of his generation worshipped and served, were idols of the den and idols of the market-place. On Sunday, indeed, they might profess a belief in The True, The Just, drawing nigh unto Him with their lips and honouring Him with their tongue; but their heart was far from Him. Not truth, not justice—the dictates of His eternal law—but mendacity and wrong were, consciously or unconsciously, the motive principles of their lives. The thing they practically believed and laid to heart concerning the Universe and their part therein—their real religion—was truly Heathenism: "mere sensuous representation of this mystery of Life, and for chief recognized element therein, Physical Force." "Faith in an Invisible, not as real only, but as the only reality," "the recognition that Time, through every meanest moment of it, rests on Eternity," —of that he found small trace. The political order was reared on one fundamental lie—the right of all men, whatever their capacity or incapacity, to an equal share of political power: the economic order, upon another fundamental lie, expressed in the phrase, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." The worship of majorities and the worship of Pigswash, Rousseauan Egalitarianism and Benthamite Utilitarianism

—these were the false religions which Carlyle found dominating men's hearts and lives: religions not exclusive of each other, for both were but different expressions of the same crass Materialism. Carlyle judged that they had poisoned the very fount of human thought, and made human speech essentially false. They were a flat negation of the Divine Law of the Universe: "the law of Nature and of Nations," ruling over every department of human life, public or private, by its mandates or by its penalties. "Thou Great Soul of the World, Thou art just," he exclaims in one place. But in the prevailing creeds, political and economic, that belief had no place. "A wretched, unsympathetic, scraggy Atheism and Egoism" had taken its place. "Vortex reigns, having kicked out Zeus," said the Attic humourist: Δῖνος βασιλεύει τὸν Δί' ἐξεληλακώς. Carlyle found that the hyperindividualism of the day had made this literally true. Man and his unstable caprices and insatiable cupidities had taken the place of God and His immutable law, the expression of perfect reason. Justice, according to the new doctrine, is what the many wish—"ce que le peuple veut est juste." The comfort of the many, it teaches, is the test of right and wrong, and the end of life. "All institutions"—*all*, note, without exception—"ought to have for their aim the physical, intellectual, and moral amelioration of the poorest and most numerous class," Mr. John Morley declares; adding, "this is the People," with a capital P.

Now, these were to Carlyle false ways, which he utterly abhorred. He divided mankind into two classes — the wise few, and the unwise many who have men's susceptibilities, appetites, and capabilities, but not the insights and higher virtues of men. And not the unwise many, but the wise few, he taught, were the rightful rulers, the divinely appointed guides of mankind. This is, in substance, his doctrine of great men. To the cult of majorities he opposed the cult of superiorities; to the rule of the multitude, the necessity of loyalty and obedience. Carlyle conceived of a hero as a man who has received a divine mission and who triumphantly carries it out, at all perils: whether in captivity, like Moses; in the cloister, like Abbot Samson; on the field of battle, like Cromwell. "It is the property of the hero," he tells us, "in every time, in every place, in every situation, that he comes back to reality: that he stands upon things, and not upon shews of things." The intellectual endowments of the man are of small importance. It is a moral force which makes him a hero. It is the virility—*virtue*—wherewith he accomplishes his work, that makes us bow down before him in wonder and reverence. I need hardly observe that this doctrine of heroes is the negation of the reign of fatalism, of necessity, of logical enchainment in history. It is, of course, also the negation of Rousseauan egalitarianism, and the "one man, one vote" sophism. "Of the theory of equality of voting," he judged, "the annals of human infatuation do not contain the equal." "This, at bottom," he declared, "is the wish and prayer of all human hearts, everywhere and at all times; 'Give me a leader; a true leader, not a false, sham leader—a true leader that he may guide me on the true way, that I may be loyal to him, that I may swear fealty to him and follow him, and feel that it is well with me.'" This true leader, or hero, Carlyle warned the world, would never be obtained by the existing method of universal suffrage and ballot boxes. That method, he insisted, must issue in "phantasm captains," at best mediocrities, but usually scoundrels. Consider this passage from his *Latter Day Pamphlets* :—

> "Unanimity on board ship—yes, indeed, the ship's crew may be very unanimous, which doubtless, for the time being, will be very comfortable for the ship's crew, and to their phantasm captain, if they have one. But if the tack they unanimously steer upon is guiding them into the belly of the abyss, it will not profit them much. Ships accordingly do not use the ballot box, and they reject the phantasm species of captain. One wishes much some other entities, since all entities lie under the same rigorous set of laws, could be brought to show as much wisdom, and sense at least of self-preservation—the first command of nature."

Again, to the purely empirical doctrine, based on calculations of profit and loss, that happiness, or as Mr. Herbert Spencer calls it, "agreeable feeling," is the test of all rules of conduct and the end of life, Carlyle opposed the fundamental, aboriginal, indecomposable idea of right, as a divine order, ruling through the universe. He felt that right, as such, differs from happiness or agreeable feeling, as such, in its very essence, just as hearing differs from seeing, or feeling from intellect. Not the comfortable, the delectable, the expedient, no—but the true, the just, the good are, he taught, the ideals that most potently attract men, and that alone satisfy the godlike which is in them. Nay, more, the very hardships, dangers, sacrifices attending the pursuit of those ideals—things uncomfortable, undelectable, inexpedient, to flesh and blood—have in themselves a charm for us. "It is a calumny on men," Carlyle declares—and the words may well be noted in view of the undue disparagement of human nature often alleged against him—"it is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense, sugar-plums of any kind in this world or the next. In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. . . . Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations." The whole doctrine of the so-called orthodox political economists appeared to Carlyle false: mere "pig-philosophy," absolutely opposed to the true laws whereby we live and move and have our being as men. He was never tired of overwhelming it with ridicule and contempt. He had read, as he once expressed himself, "some barrowfuls" of the works of its expositors. And the more he read them, the less he liked it. He saw clearly enough that starting, as it does, from premises arbitrarily assumed, or imperfectly verified, isolating, as it does, certain facts with which it deals from others inseparably bound up with them, it is not a real science, but a pseudo-science, or, as Toynbee called Ricardo's once famous book, "an intellectual imposture." It is now dead, that old orthodox political economy, and let us hope will soon receive fitting burial: the burial of an ass. Perhaps Carlyle did more than any other man to kill it, and to bring home the truth insisted on so fruitfully in Germany by the school of Hildebrand, Knies, Roscher, Brentano, Held, Schmoller, Nasse, Schäffle, Rösler, and Wagner, that political economy must properly be considered among those ethical sciences which have the free actions of men as their subject-matter.

Further, Carlyle discerned and declared, that at the root of Rousseauan Egalitarianism and Benthamite Utilitarianism there lay a false conception of human freedom; an untrue doctrine of man's autonomy; issuing, in the one case, in the tyranny of the mob: in the other, in the tyranny of capitalists. Both to Rousseau and to Bentham, as to Adam Smith before him, liberty meant lawlessness. It was part of Carlyle's message to the world that there was no liberty save in obedience to the laws of the universe. He proclaimed, in his own fashion, the truth so admirably expressed by Kant, that the distinction of a rational being, whereby he is altogether differentiated from irrational nature, is, "the faculty of acting according to the consciousness of laws": that our free action properly means action from a rational, not an animal motive. The account of freedom given by a teacher much honoured at the present day—"the ability of each to carry on his own life without hindrance from others, so long as he does not hinder them"—by no means approved itself to Carlyle. Such freedom he regarded as merely negative, without root in itself; physical, not rational: chaotic, not constructive: bestial, not human. Everywhere, as I said just now, he found the condition of human freedom in obedience to law issuing from the nature of things; divine in the truest sense, as necessarily existing, as proceeding from the Necessary Being who, as Schiller sings, discreetly veils Himself in eternal laws: "Bescheiden verhüllt er sich in ewigen Gesetzen." Only in the apprehension of this truth and in its practice—which is justice—he testified, can man break his birth's invidious bar, deliver himself from servitude to physical necessity, and work out his liberty. "Act well your part—therein all honour lies," the great moral poet of the last century sings. Yes; and all freedom too, Carlyle would have added. A man's true freedom, Carlyle judged, resides in liberty to find his appointed work in the world, and to do it with all his might. The emancipated and voting Demerara nigger, his viscera full of pumpkin, his rum bottle in his hand, and no breeches on his body, declining to do a stroke of work beyond what was needed for procuring rum and pumpkin, did not answer to Carlyle's conception of a free man. As little did the English labourer, also endowed with a vote, free, under what Adam Smith calls, "the obvious and simple system of natural liberty," "to pursue his own interests his own way, and to bring his industry and his capital into competition with those of any men or order of men." "Lord of himself, that heritage of woe," his capital consisted of his ten fingers, skilled or unskilled; his liberty, in the choice offered him to toil for the minimum competition wage on which he could live and propagate, or to starve, steal, or go into the workhouse.

The true description of the political and economical condition of this age appeared to Carlyle to be, not liberty, but anarchy. The

Democracy of our day—"false Democracy" a thinker of a very different school, John Stuart Mill, called it—Carlyle admonished the world, is "a self-cancelling business," "has in it no finality;" is merely "a swift transition towards something other and farther." "Not towards the impossibility, self-government of a multitude by a multitude, but towards some possibility of government by the wisest, does bewildered Europe struggle; the blessedest possibility, not misgovernment, not *Laissez-faire,* but veritable government. . . . The relation of the taught to their teacher, of the loyal subject to his guiding king, is, under one shape or another, the vital element of human society; indispensable to it, perennial in it; without which, as a body reft of its soul, it falls down into death, and with horrid, noisome dissolution, passes away and disappears." It was in his book on *Chartism,* published, you will remember, in 1839, that these words were written. More than thirty years afterwards France, "full of mad and loud oblivion of the laws of the universe," appeared to Carlyle emphatically to echo the monition they contain. In 1871, he wrote of "the murderous doings by the poorest classes in Paris," which make that year terrible in the annals of our century, "they are a tremendous proclamation to the upper classes in all countries, 'Our condition, after eighty-two years of struggling, O ye quack upper classes, is still unimproved: more intolerable from year to year, from revolution to revolution; and by the Eternal Powers, if you cannot mend it, we will blow up the world, along with ourselves and you.' "

It is sometimes asserted that Carlyle's sympathies were largely with the Socialistic movement. I should like to say a few words about that. Socialism—whatever else it may or may not be—is unquestionably a protest against the political and economical anarchy of our day, and on behalf of a reorganization of the commonwealth. With this protest Carlyle did deeply sympathize. He held that the State is not a fortuitous congeries of unrelated human units, but an organism—a truth utterly hidden from the eyes of Rousseau and Bentham: an organism consisting of parts not uniform, but diverse; representing various degrees of individuality; fulfilling distinct functions; and all co-operant to the end of the commonweal. More, he held that it is an ethical organism, the outcome of an order of necessary truths, quite independent of human volition: its very foundation the acknowledgment that there are eternal, immutable principles of right and wrong; its office to unite its members by a moral bond. He held that those rights of the individual, to which it gives validity and coerciveness, are conditioned by duties, and exist in subordination to the supreme claims of the community; that they are not absolute but relative to moral ends. He held that men cannot continue to insist upon their rights if they neglect the duties which are the complement of those rights; and that if they do insist, they will find their insistence, in the long run, idle, because unjust. And so, with regard to the right of private property in particular, he held that it is conditioned by the duty to work, that it is fiduciary and must be exercised for the benefit of the community, for the common good. To the question, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" he would reply: "It is not your own, in strictness: you did not create it: 'the earth is the Lord's and no the Duke's,' as the Scotch peasant said. You are a steward, bound to use what has been entrusted to you in the way prescribed by reason, by the laws of the universe: bound to employ your one talent, or your ten talents, for the service of your day and generation—to work 'as ever in the Great Taskmaster's eye;' bound under the penalties that are the sanctions of those laws." "You ask [a man] at the year's end, 'Where is your three hundred thousand pounds? what have you realized to me with that?' He answers, in indignant surprise, 'Done with it! Who are you that ask? I have eaten it; I and my flunkies and parasites, and slaves, two-footed and four-footed, in an ornamental manner; and I am here alive by it—*I* am realized by it to you.' It is such an answer as was never before given under the sun—an answer that fills me with boding apprehension, with foreshadows of despair." Such was Carlyle's message to the unemployed rich, in *Past and Present.* And so, in his *Chartism,* he warns them: "A day is ever struggling forward, a day will arrive, in some approximate degree, when he who has no work to do, by whatever name he may be called, will not find it good to show himself in our corner of the solar system; but may go and look out elsewhere if there be an *idle* Planet discoverable."

Carlyle taught then that work is a social function and property a social trust. Again, he discerned and proclaimed that the great economic problem of the age is the proper division of the fruits of labour; and that we can no longer leave that division "to be scrambled for by the Law of the Strongest, Law of Supply-and-Demand, Law of *Laissez-faire,* and other idle laws and unlaws." "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work, is as just a demand as governed men ever made of governors. It is the everlasting right of man." But the demand of the labourer, his just demand, goes beyond that. Cash payment is not the sole nexus of man and man. Civil society is an ethical organism, and its reciprocal rights and duties cannot be so satisfied. "It is for justice that the poor labourer struggles; for just wages, not in money only. An ever-toiling inferior, he would fain (though as yet he knows it not) find for himself a superior, that should wisely and lovingly govern. Is not that, too, the just wages of his service done? It is for a manlike place and relation in this world, where he sees himself a man, that he struggles." That place, Carlyle believed, would never be attained by him under the existing *régime* of individualism and competition. He saw and testified, through evil report and through good report—chiefly through evil—that the question of Capital *v.* Labour is not merely a stomach question: that it is an ethical, yes, and a religious question: that the relation of master and man is a moral bond, involving grave duties and grave responsibilities on either side; duties and responsibilities of a *human* character. "Love of men cannot be bought by cash payment, and without love men cannot endure to be together." The truth succinctly expressed by Professor Ingram, "The mere conflict of private interests will never produce a well-ordered commonwealth of labour," was ever present to Carlyle. The reorganization of industry upon an ethical basis, he well knew and constantly declared, was a task now lying before the world, which *must* be carried through. This was his message to the end. Thus in his *Edinburgh Address*, after noting how a rough, rude, ignorant man is formed into a trained soldier, he went on to observe that "there were many things that could be regimented, organized into this mute system . . . in some of the mechanical, commercial, and manufacturing departments." And in his *Niagara* he declared, for the last time, his conviction that "servantship and mastership, on the nomadic principle, was ever, or will ever be, except for brief periods, impossible among human creatures." It is worth while noting how in this ultimate work of his he has pointed to the necessity of universal military service, and indicated some of the priceless benefits which would accrue from it. I will read a few of his words.

"I always fancy there might be much done in the way of military drill withal. Beyond all other schooling, and as supplement or even as succedaneum for all other, one often wishes the entire population could be thoroughly drilled, into co-operative movement, into individual behaviour, correct, precise, and at once habitual and orderly as mathematics, in all or in very, very many points, and ultimately in the point of actual military service, should such be required. . . . I would begin with it, in mild, soft forms so soon almost as my children were able to stand on their legs; and I would never wholly remit it till they had done with the world and me. Poor Wilderspin knew something of this; the great Goethe evidently knew a good deal! This of outwardly combined and plainly consociated Discipline, in simultaneous movement and action, which may be practical, symbolical, artistic, mechanical in all degrees and modes,—is one of the noblest capabilities of man (most sadly undervalued hitherto); and one he takes the greatest pleasure in exercising and unfolding, not to mention at all the invaluable benefit it would afford him if unfolded. . . . A richer mine than any in California for poor human creatures—richer by what a multiple; and hitherto as good as never opened, worked only for the fighting purpose. Assuredly I would not neglect the fighting purpose; no, from sixteen to sixty, not a son of mine but should know the soldier's function too, and be able to defend his native soil and self, in best perfection when need came. But I should not begin with this; I should carefully end with this, after careful travel in innumerable fruitful fields by the way leading to this. . . . Nay, I often consider farther, if, in any country, the Drill-Sergeant himself fall into the partly imaginary or humbug condition (as is my frightful apprehension of him here in England, on survey of him in his marvellous Crimean expeditions, marvellous court-martial revelations, newspaper controversies, and the like), what is to become of that country and its thrice-miserable Drill-Sergeant? Reformed Parliament, I hear has decided on a 'thorough Army reform' as one of the first things. So that we shall at length have a perfect Army, field-worthy and correct in all points, thinks Reformed Parliament? Alas, yes; and if the sky fall we shall catch larks too."

I remember one of Carlyle's critics, some years ago, in a magazine of name, expressing a doubt "whether he had ever thrown out a single hint which could be useful to his own generation, or profitable to them that come after." I confess that the utterances of his on our public affairs, which I have put before you, seem to me to manifest what Browning called "insight and outsight" in a degree possessed by no one else of our age; to be prophetic in the highest and truest sense of the word—"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." They offer a singular contrast to "the raging inanities of politics"—the phrase is Carlyle's—which filled the newspapers and heads of most men of his generation—probably of his critic, among others.

I have said, perhaps, enough to indicate—for that is our present point—what Carlyle had in common with the Socialistic movement. Of course he did not believe in the equal distribution of physical comfort—the Utopia which most of its leaders are looking for and, as they suppose, hastening unto—any more than he believed in the equal distribution of political power, regarded by them as a means to that end. But, more, between him and the most widely popular school of Socialism there was a great gulf fixed. Carlyle's political and economical doctrines were grounded upon his stern and lofty Theism; upon his transcendental conception of duty. They were the direct outcome of his intense, living, and life-giving belief in a Supreme Moral Governor of the Universe in whom the ethical order is eternally conceived, eternally realized; whose law, the expression of perfect reason, is absolute justice, ruling everywhere by its mandates or its penalties; that "great immutable pre-existent law," Burke called it, "prior to all our devices and prior to all our sensations, by which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe, out of which we cannot stir." But in Socialism, as taught by its most widely popular and influential expositors, there is no recognition of that Supreme Moral Governor, of that divine, eternal, and necessary Law of Right, obligatory upon all wills, in all spheres of action, in all worlds, from which all human rights spring, of which all human laws, so far forth as they are just, are applications and adaptations. No doubt Socialism is a word covering many varieties of doctrine. The literature of the subject is enormous, and is daily growing. No doubt a Socialism is conceivable which might be described in Prince von Bismarck's phrase as "applied Christianity." Indeed, the Dean of Ely has endeavoured to formulate such a doctrine in his *Democratic Creed*, a document containing little, I think, which Carlyle would not have accepted. But this is not what Socialism commonly means. This is not the Socialism recommended to the world by Marx and Bebel, by Malon and Jaurès, by Hyndman and Gronlund. The doctrine of these teachers is frankly materialistic. Their gospel is as much a gospel of Pigswash as is the doctrine of Bentham and the old political economists. With one accord they hold wealth the *summum bonum*, and what they call happiness—that is, physical comfort, accompanied, perhaps, by a certain modicum of intellectual cultivation—the true and sole end of man. Their Socialism is utterly unethical, for its only morality is a morality of self-interest, which is no morality at all. God, Immortality, Eternity, have no place in it. It has no religion, but offers itself as a substitute for all religions. That has been very clearly stated by Mr. Belfort Bax—one of the ablest and most authoritative of Socialist leaders—in his noteworthy volume, *The Religion of Socialism*:—

"Socialism," he tells us, "utterly despises the 'other world' with all its stage properties—that is, the present objects of religion. It brings back religion from heaven to earth. It looks beyond the present moment or the present individual life, indeed, though not to another world, but to another and a higher social life in this world. It is in the hope and the struggle for this higher social life, ever widening, ever intensifying, whose ultimate possibilities are beyond the power of language to express, or thought to conceive, that the Socialist finds his ideal, his religion."

And again:—

"The establishment of society on a Socialistic basis, would imply the definite abandonment of all theological cults, since the notion of a transcendent god or semi-divine prophet is but the counterpart and analogue of the transcendent governing class. So soon as we are rid of the desire of one section of the community to enslave another, the dogmas of an effete creed will lose their interest. As the religion of slave industry was Paganism, as the religion of serfage was Catholic Christianity or Sacerdotalism, as the religion of capitalism is Protestant Christianity or Biblical dogma, so the religion of collective and co-operative industry is Humanism, which is only another name for Socialism."

Assuredly Carlyle would have fully agreed with Leo XIII. in reprobating such Socialism as "a deadly plague" (lethiferam pestem), as a blasphemy, to use the words of Mohammed concerning a somewhat similar doctrine, at which "the heavens might tear open and the earth cleave asunder." He would have regarded it as the direct offspring of the philosophy of the trough taught by Bentham and the old orthodox political economists; a mere chapter, and a most ignoble one, in the gospel of Pigswash.

Before I leave this subject I should like to point out that Carlyle's political and social doctrines, however strange they may have sounded in the ears of his generation, were by no means new. Like his Theism and his ethics, they may be found, in substance, in St. Thomas Aquinas.

It is not, of course, that our Latter Day Prophet derived his teachings from the Angelic Doctor, of whom we may be quite sure he had never read a line. It is that, whether in the thirteenth century or in the nineteenth, the human reason, correctly exercised, tends to the same conclusions in moral philosophy—of which politics and economics are branches—determining what ethical obligation is, fixing the comprehension of the idea "I ought," unfolding the extension of that idea, and exhibiting what things fall under its categorical imperative. There are no new truths—suffer me again to insist on this—in politics or economics (I mean of course fundamental truths), although, in different stages of civilization, the application of old truths varies. The warning of Burke to the sophists and sciolists of his generation is equally applicable to the sophists and sciolists of ours. "We know that we have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty which were understood long before we were born, altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped its mould upon our presumption, and the silent tomb shall have imposed its law on our pert loquacity."

So much must suffice regarding this great teacher, in whom I reverently recognize the last of our prophets, and by no means the least. It will be said that his teaching was incomplete, his mission imperfect. I am not concerned to deny that. Thus, in his political and social doctrine, I think he inadequately appreciated the sacred rights and inalienable prerogatives of human personality. His standpoint, in viewing public affairs, was very much that of a Hebrew seer — of Elijah, say, or Elisha. Well, the thoughts of men have widened since the days of those great Jewish patriots and sages. No doubt they apprehended the sacredness of the moral Ego more truly than any other of the illustrious teachers of the antique world, and, in their way, they witnessed for it, and vindicated it. But the ages which divide us from them, have beheld the gradual evolution of the personal, social, and public prerogatives which make up individual freedom. It is in this that the real political progress of the world consists. I think Carlyle inadequately realized, and insufficiently valued that progress. Again, I honour him for having so effectively insisted on the great truth—so I account it—of retributive justice; for having vindicated, so emphatically, the verity that punishment is, first and before all things, vindictive; that it is what is due to the evildoer, what he has justly earned; that it is, in Hegel's phrase, the other half of crime; the natural and therefore the divinely appointed sequel of the wrongful deed. But Carlyle does not always remember—he appears, for example, to have forgotten it in certain well-known passages of his *Latter Day Pamphlets*—that behind the malefactor we should still see the man; that the criminal, in his deepest degradation and dishonour, does not cease to be a *person*, with claims upon, with rights against society, springing from the essential nature of humanity.

And so in his religious belief—from which, as I have pointed out, all his teaching flowed—many precious elements, as it seems to me, are lacking: elements that the world cannot do without. A very judicious critic has said that in Carlyle's religion there was no *New Testament*. Certainly there was not much of the *New Testament* in it. To be candid—and I owe candour both to you and to myself—I think Carlyle rejected many things in his hereditary creed which are tenable after criticism has done its worst. But "we speak that we do know, and we testify that we have seen." The man's intense veracity would not suffer him to go one hair's-breadth beyond what he knew and had seen. And this absolute loyalty to truth was one great secret of his power. We must remember, however, that although personally unable to associate himself with any Christian Church or sect, his attitude to Christianity, throughout his life, was one of devout and grateful reverence. For Christian dogmas he cared little. At Cambridge there is, or was, a street called St. Tibb's Lane. And I remember, that when a freshman of that University—being, as I suppose, of an inquiring turn of mind—I asked a very accomplished Scottish friend, supposed to know everything, who St. Tibbs was. He replied, "I am sorry I cannot tell you. I was not brought up in the worship of Tibbs." Well, Carlyle was not brought up to attach much importance to the canons of Ecumenical Councils, or the rulings of Popes, whence, as a matter of fact, the definitions of Christian dogmas current in the world are, chiefly, derived. Religious doctrines appeared to him, for the most part, mere commandments of men. He distinguished between them and what he called the soul of the Christian religion. Thus, in his *Edinburgh Address*, which may be taken to present his fully matured view on the matter, he said, "To learn to recognize in pain, sorrow, contradiction—even in these things, odious as they are to flesh and blood—to learn that there lies in them a priceless blessing, that Goethe defines as being the soul of the Christian religion: the highest of all religions: a height, as he says—and that is very true even to the letter, as I consider—to which the human species was fated and enabled to attain; and from which, having attained it, it can never retrograde." For the Person and teaching of the Author of Christianity he had always the greatest veneration. "The highest Voice ever heard on earth," he says in his *Lectures on Heroes:* an utterance which indeed I do not desire to press too far. We must, of course, take it in connection with his view of great individualities; a view practically identical with the Hegelian, that they are visible incarnations of the Eternal Idea. In this connection it is interesting to note how, as years went on, his sympathies with existing religions grew larger; how even that fierce dislike of the Church of Rome, which heredity and early environment had, so to speak, made part and parcel of him, greatly abated; how, at last—so Mr. Froude tells us—he came to regard the Mass as "the most genuine relic of religious belief now left to us."

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But my time is up. It only remains for me, in briefest words, to thank you for the honour you have done me by coming, in such large numbers, through this Siberian weather, to hear me on these four Thursday afternoons. To me it has been pleasant, indeed, to turn aside from the historical and metaphysical questions which have greatly occupied me of late years, and thus to renew my acquaintance with the four teachers and companions of my youth who have been my themes. I cannot, indeed, say that the pleasure has been unmixed. As, in preparation for these

Lectures, I have turned over the familiar pages, the far-off time when I first read them, in all the charm of their freshness, came back to me; and with it memories of loved friends and of lovely scenes closely associated with them; and all "the tender grace of a day that is dead." But if the swift years that hurry us through life take much from us, they leave us much, they bring us much. Their last gift to me, and assuredly not the least prized, is the indulgent audience on whose kindly faces I now look for the last time; and to whom I say regretfully, Farewell.

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